First Call for Children

'The essential needs of children should be given priority in bad times as well as good' — *Plan of Action, World Summit for Children*

Development's human face

UNICEF 4751/Goodsmith

Ensuring human needs, increasingly recognized as central to all development, is the challenge facing all governments. Here, mothers and children wait for health care at a clinic near Nouakchott (Mauritania).

Human needs, as the world increasingly acknowledges, must stand at the centre of all development efforts. This idea is based on the recognition that expenditures on health and education are not only moral imperatives but also the best investments societies can make for the future, as UNICEF's report, *The Progress of Nations 1994*, so clearly points out.

As the world prepares to gather at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo this September, this clear human focus needs to be repeatedly recalled, to help us all look beyond the disturbing figures and projections, into the lives and hopes of people.

The Programme of Action for the upcoming conference has this crucial human focus, recognizing as it does that population change, poverty, patterns of consumption and threats to the environment are so interconnected that none of them can be considered in isolation.

Progress is always made one small step at a time. In this issue we highlight some of the ways development, often achieved through the simplest of measures — vaccinating mothers to protect their infants from neonatal tetanus and extending education to hard-to-reach ethnic minorities — can help ease the spiral of poverty and population pressure facing much of the world.

Our centre spread takes us back to the population numbers, yet we hope that when you read it, you are reminded as well of the faces and lives that are too often forgotten.

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United Nations Children's Fund

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July-September 1994

Expectations high for Cairo population conference

By Dr. Nafis Sadik

A holistic approach to women's rights and reproductive health care, with the potential to save the lives of millions of women and children each year, is expected to be endorsed by the world's nations at a historic conference this September.

Surveys indicate that 120 million additional women would use a modern family planning method if information and services were more readily available. Giving many more women the choice to space their pregnancies or limit the size of their families could dramatically reduce maternal and child mortality, slow rapid population growth, facilitate efforts to alleviate poverty and help ease pressure on the environment.

Meeting this need is a key aim of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), to be held in Cairo from 5 to 13 September 1994. Within a context that emphasizes the health, education and empowerment of women, the Conference will focus on expanding access to family planning as part of a broader reproductive health package that also includes prenatal and postnatal care, safe delivery, prevention and treatment of infertility and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS, and related information and counselling.

The central premise of ICPD is that population considerations need to be made an integral part of national and international efforts to achieve sustained economic growth and sustainable development. The overall objective is to identify actions — and the means of implementing them — that will make national policies and programmes more effective

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Countries zero in on mid-decade goal for neonatal tetanus

The number of infants who die in the first three weeks of life from neonatal tetanus annually has been halved since 1980, according to the World Health Organization, and now stands at approximately 550,000. In addition, at least 30,000 fewer women are succumbing to tetanus each year. Hygienic delivery practices and better immunization rates are the reasons for the extraordinary strides. By 1993, 43 per cent of women in developing countries, on average, had received the recommended course of at least two vaccinations against tetanus. Yet much still remains to be done if the 1995 goal of elimination of neonatal tetanus* is to be reached. Alexia Lewnes reports.

At first glance, the news appears strikingly good. By 1992, the estimated neonatal tetanus death rate was below 1 per 1,000 live births in 71 countries; between 1 and 5 per 1,000 births in 67 countries; and above 5 per 1,000 live births in 27 countries.

Also good news is the fact that many countries have already reached the mid-decade goal of neonatal tetanus elimination and many others will achieve it by 1995, according to Dr. Terrel Hill, Principal Adviser for Child Survival at UNICEF.

However, along with the good news, he cautions, come the troubling and challenging details.

"Some countries may achieve a national average that meets the goal but still have areas where the incidence of neonatal tetanus remains high," Dr. Hill says. "Neonatal tetanus will not be eliminated until these areas are controlled."

Eighty per cent of deaths from neonatal tetanus occur in 14 countries alone: Bangladesh, China, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania and Viet Nam. Of those countries, Viet Nam and Indonesia have identified high-risk areas.

"The surveillance and investigation process is critical if progress is to be made in identifying neonatal tetanus clusters," says Dr. Hill. "They need to be intensified in all problem areas."

In West Java (Indonesia), for example, a strong surveillance system identified two clusters of neonatal tetanus cases. Intensive investigation revealed a crucial common thread: One traditional birth attendant (TBA) had assisted the mothers in virtually all the cases. After she was identified and trained, the incidence of neonatal tetanus fell dramatically, indicating the importance of hygienic birth practices.

Tetanus toxoid

Immunizing women with the tetanus toxoid vaccine before or during their pregnancy is the most effective way to prevent this killer disease, providing long-term protection against tetanus for the mother, but also critical in protecting her newborn during the early weeks of life.

A woman who receives two doses of tetanus toxoid at least four weeks

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* *Elimination is defined as less than one case of tetanus for every 1,000 births occurring in each administrative district throughout the world.*

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UNICEF-93-0707/Horner

Immunizing a woman against tetanus before or during pregnancy protects not only her but also her newborn during the early weeks of life. Here, a health worker vaccinates a young Peruvian girl against tetanus.

UNICEF report sparks strong media interest

The Progress of Nations 1994 report, launched by UNICEF Executive Director James P. Grant at a press conference on 21 June in Brussels and simultaneously released at numerous events around the world, is sparking lively debate in mainstream media on issues seldom aired in those forums. Mr. Grant was joined during the press conference by Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, who said children's needs are a priority in the new South Africa.

The Progress of Nations, now in its second year, offers a wealth of information, comparisons and insights on children's lives. Much of the information is organized in tables, showing at a glance where countries stand in such areas as girls' education and the use of oral rehydration therapy. The report also discusses issues such as child abuse, child poverty and youth suicides. Coverage in the industrialized world's press reflected the unease of many with the figures, rankings and conclusions in the report.

Citing "discrepancies between the achievements of some rich and poor countries in improving the welfare and education of children and women" that the report brings to light, the *Guardian* (London) pointed out that Switzerland and the United States are outperformed in terms of child survival and development by countries with lower per capita incomes.

Reuters quoted Mr. Grant as saying that the condition of children in virtually all English-speaking industrialized countries had worsened in the 1980s, while it improved steadily in continental Europe and Japan. With one fifth of American children living below the poverty level, the United States has the worst record of all industrialized nations.

The Progress of Nations, forced to use what it readily admits are often outdated statistics, makes that fact one of its major points: Too little is recorded and known about some of the most important social issues facing countries. In the light of the approaching World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 6 to 12 March 1995) — which offers the world an opportunity to renew commitment to social development goals — the report contends "the case for better social statistics has become more urgent."

Such statistics are vital not only for monitoring progress — or lack of it — but also for stimulating the debate on strategies and funding for improving children's lives. In New Zealand, for example, the country's high rate of teenage suicide reported in *The Progress of Nations* came as the Government planned to cut funding for teenage psychiatric care. Media interest was very intense, with numerous psychologists interviewed, and a heated debate on the subject was held in Parliament.

READEX
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Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa addressed some 1,500 guests at the United Nations General Assembly during the fourth annual Day of the African Child (16 June). Declared by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1990 to commemorate the 1976 killings of children in Soweto, the Day provides an opportunity to focus international attention on the situation of children in Africa.

Drama reshapes lives of Namibian street children

By Williams Nkuruh

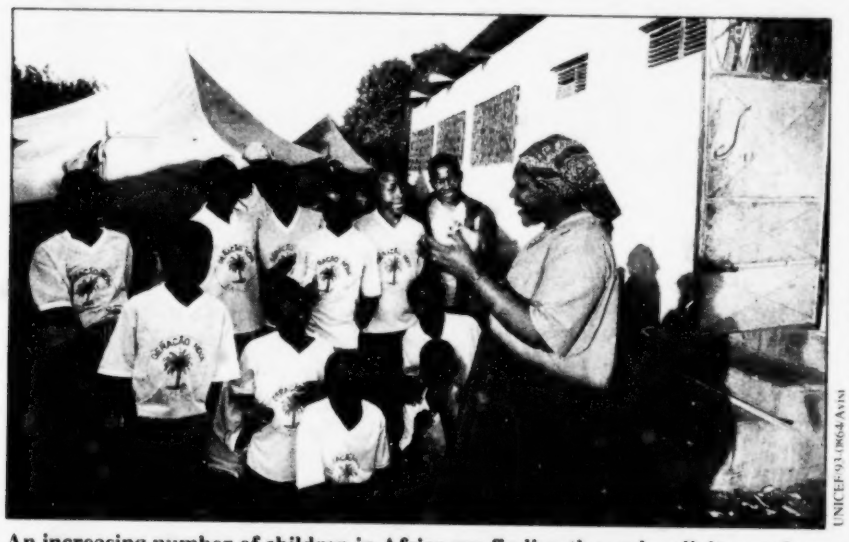
During the morning, young Garoaseb (not his real name) directs cars into parking spaces in front of the Kalahari Hotel along Independence Avenue, the main street in Namibia's capital, Windhoek.

With hair unkempt, eyes bloodshot and clothes in need of serious washing, Garoaseb's appearance seems to convince drivers that it would be in their best interest to tip this parking boy to ensure the safety of their cars.

Across the street, young Moses bangs on his little drums and sings to entertain passers-by in the hope that he will warm his way into their pockets. Singing for a living, he threatens no one. His kind are few. The Garoasebs are many.

These two young boys represent two extremes of children living on Namibia's streets. Although the problem in Namibia is not as serious as in most other African countries, it does exist and government officials and statistics point to an increase in the numbers as a result of higher levels of rural-urban migration.

In 1991, the Namibian Government, through its Ministry of Local Government and Housing, launched a feeding and education programme for children on the streets.



UNICEF-93-0804/Asin

An increasing number of children in Africa are finding themselves living on the streets. Here a group of boys participate in a programme in Mozambique designed to help street children.

Speaking during its initial stages, Clifton Sabati, then coordinator of the programme, said that besides feeding the children, the programme was intended to fill a vacuum created by the absence of social workers and to give some anchor to children who were forced onto the streets by domestic violence, poverty and other factors.

A temporary home was set up at Suiderhof, a former military base, but initially the children had no interest in the programme designed for them, nor — attuned to the independence and competitiveness of the streets — in the idea of living with each other.

According to Evelyn Sampson, one of seven Ministry officials responsible for the programme, a common thread was soon discovered: A number of the children were interested in performing.

So a drama project for some 25 children between 5 and 18 years of age was launched, through the joint efforts of the National Theatre of Namibia (NTN) and the Ministry. The architects of the project had two aims: to interest the children in the programme, and in Sampson's words "to bring to the public's attention the potential of street children and to portray them positively."

As one of the key actors in the production, Funky Afrikaner, 19 years old, said, "We wanted to show people that we have talent."

After months of rehearsals — accomplished on a shoestring budget and the inexhaustible energy of the children — the musical drama about the relationship between homeless children and the rest of society was staged in August 1991. Performances were well attended by Ministers, other senior government officials and members of the public and were praised in the media.

After the drama

A nationwide tour for the troupe was derailed by lack of funds and it became difficult to keep the drama project alive. Eventually, the children at the Suiderhof base were integrated into regular schools and vocational training programmes, which dispersed the actors and absorbed their energies. A number of them — particularly those younger than 14 — are doing well in the programmes.

The positive effects of the drama project linger, however, according to Ms. Sampson, who says it touched and altered the course of many lives.

Rasta, one of the child actors, has been frequenting the Ministry offices, seeking help to develop his singing talents into a career. If Rasta's passion to rise above the streets to higher ground is anything to go by, drama appears to have the power to change lives for the better.

Editor's note: In its national programme of action, Namibia outlines plans for achieving the goals for the year 2000, which include a healthy social environment for all. Among its efforts to help children who work or live on the streets, the country offers educational and sports activities, health care and counselling, and promotes consultations and links with parents.

Williams Nkuruh is a Namibian journalist.

COMMITTEE NEWS

Australia

ORT aid: The South Pacific Quota Governors, a branch of Quota International (a non-governmental organization of women business executives and professionals), recently presented a check for A$8,000 to the Australian Committee for UNICEF to support the UNICEF programme for control of diarrhoeal diseases/oral rehydration therapy in Bhutan. A long-standing partner of UNICEF, Quota International, with branches in Canada and the United States, has previously raised US$30,000 for child immunization programmes in Uganda.

Collectibles: A unique collection of stamps, tracing the history of UNICEF, has been donated to UNICEF South Australia by Arthur Rudnick, a teacher in Adelaide. Mr. Rudnick started collecting the stamps in 1946 when UNICEF was created to offer relief to the children of war-torn Europe. The collection, which is divided into sections highlighting historical events, education, health and immunization campaigns, is believed to be the only one of its kind.

Secretary-General urges new vision of development

Calling on the international community to develop a new and compelling vision for the future, United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has published, in a report entitled *An Agenda for Development*, a blueprint for a re-energized drive to improve the human condition.

"The concept of development — and decades of effort to reduce poverty, illiteracy, disease and mortality rates — are great achievements of this century," the Secretary-General declares in his report. "But development as a common cause is in danger of fading from the forefront of our agenda."

The current relatively theoretical text of the *Agenda* will become the preamble to the Secretary-General's final conclusions and recommendations for action, to be presented during the next session of the General Assembly which begins in September. The Secretary-General's final proposals will take into account the World Hearings on Development, organized by the President of the current General Assembly, and the proceedings of the Ministerial Session of the Economic and Social Council, both held in June.

In the *Agenda*, Mr. Boutros-Ghali says that a new human-centred "culture of development" is needed, in which peace, the economy, the environment, societal justice and democracy are each considered distinct aspects of the same drive towards a better world.

The Secretary-General says that while structural adjustment "remains a necessary prescription to serious economic imbalance," governments must be helped in addressing "the dire human consequences of such reforms." He stresses that "investment in human development is investment in long-term competitiveness," and therefore indispensable to economic growth.

Pointing to the perils of inaction in the face of the stalled drive for development, the *Agenda* notes that the combination of deteriorating economic conditions and social exclusion of large segments of the population from decisions affecting their lives is fuelling both separatist and extremist ideologies. In addition, "until development on a global scale improves, large populations will continue to move across borders despite efforts to control or impede their flow. So development is not only a fundamental human right," the Secretary-General says, it is also "the most secure basis for peace."

Women's media network established

Child labour, female infanticide and maternal mortality are among the subjects likely to appear in the Nordic press now that WomenWatch South-North Journalists' Network has been set up. The media network, formed among women journalists from Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, was created to improve media coverage in Nordic countries on South Asian girls and women.

An article on the struggles of children who work in Nepal's carpet industry has already appeared in *APU*, a popular Finnish family magazine. The piece ran among more predictable stories about the lives of movie stars and sports personalities. Similar stories on Nepal have appeared in other Nordic publications, and programmes have aired on Danish and Swedish television.

The collaboration was initiated by UNICEF when women journalists from both regions were invited to Kathmandu in October 1993 to exchange information about the situation of girls and women in their countries. The three-day conference heard in-depth presentations on prostitution, violence against girls and women, and child rights by the participating journalists and national experts.

Violence against women, both physical and emotional, dominated the discussions, according to *APU* staff writer Anu Pesonen, one of nine Nordic women journalists invited to join WomenWatch.

This initial exchange among 20 network members enabled them to learn about each other's problems and perspectives. Eventually the group hopes to improve communication and understanding among women and their communities in these two parts of the world.

"The network is a way of getting a variety of issues into print in Nordic countries that otherwise would not get covered," said Ms. Pesonen during a conversation in New York earlier this year. The network keeps her in touch with colleagues in the North as well as with journalists from the South Asian countries she met on the trip.

"You can see the same difficulties all over the world," she said, adding that in some ways people may be more likely to read about problems in another country because they do not want to admit that problems exist in their own country.

A newsletter, *WomenWatch*, coordinated by Nerun Yakub from Bangladesh and Gerd Inger Polden in Norway, keeps members informed about issues and activities. The next WomenWatch meeting on Violence against Women in South Asia is scheduled for 18-21 September in Copenhagen.

A powerful alliance on behalf of street children

By Julia Spry-Leverton

They throng out of Bamako's central Mosque late morning every Friday, stately in their robes of blue, white or grey, richly embroidered in gold. They are Bamako's devout Muslim men, numbering more than 5,000, congregated for their weekly devotions.

In this part of Mali's capital city there are mosques on practically every corner, all filled to capacity. And regularly, after the service, the exiting worshippers participate in another ceremony, on the steps and under the arches of the courtyards. Here another crowd waits to meet them and play their part.

The ceremony is the giving of alms by the faithful, in accordance with the requirements of Islam. This is a heavy responsibility in Bamako, as the crowd comprises those desperately in need of charity, those who are on the streets as beggars.

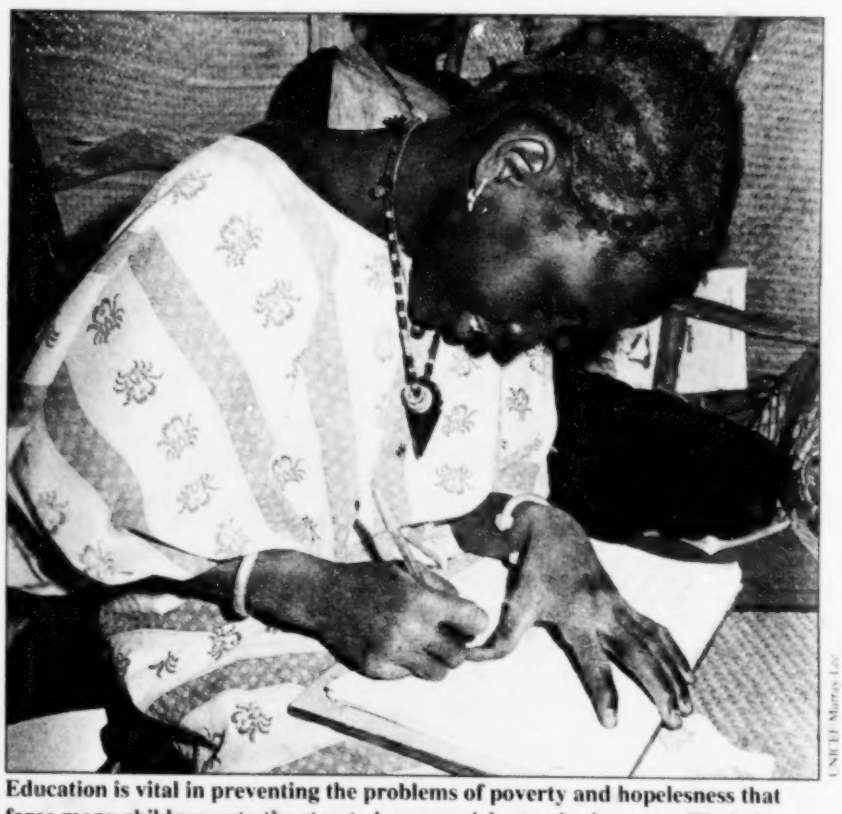
On any Friday here the poor number around 15,000. According to a 1992 government survey, almost one third (4,486) are children, two boys for every girl. Walk or drive anywhere in Bamako and, at every turn, these children with pleading faces and suppliant hands are there.

These children are living proof of Mali's struggling economy. In the last 15 years, Bamako has seen a phenomenal influx of people who have abandoned the drought- and desert-ravaged countryside. Health facilities, sanitation, even water supply, are almost non-existent in the sprawling neighbourhoods the new arrivals have created in the city.

Many of the young people have been sent here from rural areas because their families can no longer support them. Some are asked to beg by exploitative parents who hope a small child will inspire more pity than an adult. Some are *garibus*, children placed with a Koranic scholar, who gives them instruction in exchange for their begging for food to sustain themselves and his family. Most, however, have had little or no education.

Whatever the reasons for their presence on Bamako's streets, the statistics are deeply worrying to Bamako's social service providers. With UNICEF support they have just begun a five-year programme to improve the most disadvantaged sections of the city.

The urban programme provides basic services as well as training in literacy and skills for women, ensuring that the community participates and manages its own development. Finding ways to offer young people a productive role in their community is also a high priority.



UNICEF/Murray Lee

Education is vital in preventing the problems of poverty and hopelessness that force many children onto the street. A young girl attends class near Timbuktu.

"Up to now we have not known the numbers involved, nor what to do for them," says Mohamed Maiga, social services chief for the poorest and most crowded district of Bamako. "My district is a pilot project, the first to take a census of the street children and then to plan how to help."

To implement the programme, resident 'animators' will conduct consultations with the community about the 18-month long training courses to be offered, to benefit initially 100 young people.

For boys, there will be carpentry, iron-forging, tailoring and shoe repair. For girls, activities such as hairdressing will be taught, as well as new business strategies, such as mattress-making using duck feathers and the retailing of charcoal.

The parents of the trainees make a cash contribution of CFA 50,000 (US $92) which they are able to negotiate as a loan, repayable over four years. Once trained, the graduates' success in earning income with their new skills will be monitored.

Help for the most vulnerable

To offer hope to the most vulnerable group of street children in the city, those who have neither home nor family, an NGO known as ENDA Jeunesse (Youth) Action has recently initiated a programme to address their special needs.

A large, shaded courtyard in the city centre is the setting for numerous activities. An array of red and white traffic signs gleam with fresh paint, the latest commission the carpentry workshop has taken on. In the assorted huts around the yard's perimeter, students are reupholstering furniture, making electrical repairs, manufacturing leather sandals and, in bubbling vats of varied hues, dying dress fabric designed with striped and circular wax relief designs.

ENDA's nine animators had worked for six years with Bamako's street child population before starting this project. With this workshop programme, their emphasis has changed from a purely 'curative' role to one that attempts to address the problems of vagrancy, delinquency and continuing dependency. As the young people become financially independent, they are encouraged to move from the sheltered environment of the ENDA courtyard to households they establish in their chosen neighbourhood. For some, this might even mean returning to their villages. ENDA makes painstaking efforts to trace families and involve them in what their children are doing.

Collaboration between this international NGO, local church groups, government social services and UNICEF creates a powerful alliance that is working on behalf of Bamako's street children. Lessons learned will be applied to other urban centres in Mali, such as Mopti, where the problem of street children is also rapidly on the rise.

Child Health Congress to honour UNICEF Executive Director

Thousands of child health leaders and professionals are expected to attend Child Health 2000 — the Second World Congress and Exposition, to be held in Vancouver, British Columbia (Canada), from 30 May to 3 June 1995.

A comprehensive programme is planned for this congress on child health, including sessions on preventive measures for acute respiratory infections and diarrhoeal diseases, youth, AIDS and alternative medicine.

Among the international health experts, researchers and health policy decision makers scheduled to speak are Margaret Catley-Carlson, President of the Population Council; Demissie Habte, of the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases Research in Bangladesh; Jonas Salk, developer of the oral polio vaccine; and several Nobel Prize winners.

Building on the success of the first Congress held in 1992, up to 4,000 health professionals, family practitioners, paediatricians and other child health professionals and administrators, child health advocates and NGO representatives are expected to attend the five-day event. Simultaneous sessions during the programme will cover global child health issues on topics such as breast-feeding, cancer in children, children's rights, immunology, and rehabilitative and hospice care.

The conference is organized by the non-profit Global Child Health Society and is expected to further heighten global awareness about the needs, health, rights and safety of the world's children.

At one full-day session, world leaders, child health workers, children's advocates and children themselves will pay tribute to the work of James P. Grant, UNICEF Executive Director. Another full day will be devoted to a review of the status and progress of UNICEF programmes around the world.

For further details, please contact: Child Health 2000, #113-990 Beach Avenue, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V6E 4M2; tel. 604-682-6008; fax 604-682-6771.

Discrimination against women begins as discrimination against girls.

Conference brings girls' issues into sharper focus

By Catharine Way

Efforts to end what UNICEF India Representative Dr. Jon Rohde called "the last and greatest of obscenities — the apartheid of gender" were the focus of a recent meeting in India.

The Interregional Consultation on the Girl Child, held in Anand, Gujarat State, in February, brought together 48 participants from 25 countries, including representatives of governments, non-governmental organizations, academia, UNICEF field and headquarters offices and other United Nations agencies.

A central rallying cry was the need for more sex-disaggregated data on children, because little information on children, with the exception of data on education, is currently broken down by gender.

"You reduce gender disparity simply by measuring it," said Lata Singh, Secretary of India's Department of Women and Child Development, in her opening address to the Consultation. "Everything must be disaggregated by gender. Disaggregation is a reminder that there is a difference," and therefore the first step in reducing the difference.

Taking the concept of disparity awareness one step further, Dr. Rohde added, "Disparity reduction should be UNICEF's theme throughout its programmes — reducing disparity between genders, between rich and poor, between castes."

On the agenda

In three days of field trips to UNICEF-assisted projects and three days of plenary and group meetings, participants addressed the range of issues affecting girls and development: education, health, nutrition, adolescent pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, harmful cultural practices — such as female genital mutilation — and girls in especially difficult circumstances. Education was a key theme and the highest priority of three regional groups (South Asia, Eastern and Southern Africa, and West and Central Africa) of six making regional recommendations at the end of the week.

The participants advocated measures — such as special teacher training, the revision of curricula and textbooks and provision of day-care services near schools — to encourage girls to begin and complete primary school.

Eradicating harmful cultural practices and addressing the needs of girls in especially difficult circumstances were other important topics. Recommendations included promoting the ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and support for actions that protect girls from such abuses as child trafficking and genital mutilation.

In addition, participants made recommendations for UNICEF's contribution to the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 4-15 September 1995). These underscored the importance of the life-cycle perspective to women's advancement, recognizing that discrimination against women begins as discrimination against girls and that girls' and women's needs must be addressed as part of a single continuum leading to gender equality.

Worth a thousand words

If a picture is worth a thousand words, a field trip is worth a thousand policy discussions. Participants visited several villages to learn firsthand about the conditions of girls and women and see projects receiving UNICEF assistance.

In each village, an all-too-familiar pattern emerged: As soon as the visitors arrived, the men took over. They spoke for their wives and daughters — who sat silently and docilely in the background — and insisted that the women had no complaints. However, projects aimed at increasing women's income showed progress. The village of Shahpur lacks a reliable water source and therefore cannot support itself through agriculture. Each day about 50 women gather under a canopy from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. — leaving their children in a simple crèche a few yards away — to make colourful handicrafts that they sell in cooperative stores.

Where before people could afford to eat only bread and onions, now with the extra income they supplement their diet with milk, vegetables, sugar and oil.

But many families are still too poor to free their children from work to attend the village primary school and few, if any, of the girls attend secondary school. The reasons given were security, because the secondary school is a kilometre away, and the need for work. As one mother said, "If everyone goes to school, who will earn money?"

Participants also visited the progressive, worker-owned Amul Dairy Cooperative, a lucrative outlet for the milk produced by the cows and buffaloes tended by village women. But women are not allowed to work on the factory floor for "cultural reasons," according to Ravi Vaishnav, a company spokesman: The work is "too heavy," and women "find it hard to work the evening and night shifts."

Maybe when today's girl grows up she will have the chance to decide for herself what work is appropriate for her.

Catharine Way is consultant editor of the UNICEF Features Service.

Programmes that work

Among many positive experiences described during the Interregional Consultation on the Girl Child were the following projects:

• A non-governmental organization, based in Chiang Rai Province in the north of Thailand, identifies and helps girls at risk of being ensnared in child prostitution. Recognizing that poverty often forces girls to leave school and enter prostitution to earn money for their families, the Development and Education Programme for Daughters and Community Centres pays for school fees, uniforms, transport and other costs of attending secondary school. The aim is for each girl to complete at least three years of secondary education and to leave school with enough knowledge and self-esteem to gain employment.

• In a 'child to child' pilot programme in Turkey, 16 seventh-grade girl students at a regional boarding school were recruited to become leaders in their home villages. After four days of training they returned to their villages for the summer equipped to spread messages about health and about the value of girls and the importance of educating them. An evaluation showed that the programme has raised the girls' self-confidence and successfully conveyed messages to the villagers, although the health messages had 'stuck' better than those about the value of girls.

Plans call for expanding the programme to all 117 boarding schools in the region.

Nearing neonatal tetanus goal

continued from page 1

apart, and a third dose 6 to 12 months later, should have immunity for at least five years. A total of five doses produces lifelong immunity. Along with efficacy, the vaccine's cost needs to be counted among its advantages: At only 5 US cents a dose, it is one of the cheapest vaccines available.

Infants born to immunized mothers acquire temporary immunity for about five months. However, an infant born fewer than 15 days after the mother's second or subsequent dose will not be protected because her body will not have produced sufficient antibodies to pass on to her child.

Research is currently under way to develop a vaccine that confers full protection in a single dose.

Missed opportunities

"There is strong evidence that health workers are missing opportunities," says Dr. Hill. "Women who bring in their children to be vaccinated are not screened and checked to see if they have been vaccinated against tetanus."

As a result, 51 per cent of neonatal tetanus deaths in 1992 occurred in countries where children's access to routine immunization was high, defined as DPT3 coverage greater than 70 per cent, according to WHO.

Additional obstacles facing countries in their efforts to eliminate the disease include misinformation about the vaccine. Stories circulate, for example, that the vaccination causes sterility.

Cultural constraints also interfere with immunization efforts. In some South Asian countries, for example, contact between members of the opposite sex outside the family is considered inappropriate. With vaccinators in these countries often predominantly men, women are not well-reached. "We need female role models to give the immunization campaign a spur and more female vaccinators in countries where cultural biases persist," says Dr. Hill.

Success by 1995

The most effective strategy to help countries reach the 1995 goal, according to Dr. Hill, is one that immunizes all pregnant women; immunizes all women of child-bearing age in high-risk areas; and promotes clean delivery throughout the country.

A longer-term strategy would include immunizing all girls — three times during infancy, once when they enter school and then again at age 12 or 13 for lifelong immunity.

As with all national health campaigns, commitment matters most. In Zimbabwe, a country with a per capita GNP of US$570 (in 1992), 80 per cent of pregnant women are immunized against tetanus.

Thailand has cut neonatal tetanus deaths by half in the last three years by training midwives in safe delivery practices and doubling immunization coverage among pregnant women.

While the Latin America and Caribbean region is close to achieving the goal, special efforts are needed in a number of countries in Africa and in Bangladesh, China and Pakistan. In China alone there are as many as 100,000 neonatal tetanus deaths per year.

Unleashing literacy power: Women in Haiti

By Jillian Aldebron

Group after group of peasant women chanted from a makeshift stage, their bare feet pounding rhythmic clouds of dust from the rough planks. Conch shells whistled as the women sang:

Women, if we don't cry out
even the sheep will cry;
women, if we don't speak up
the very rocks will speak.

Steaming under the blue and white canopy, 3,000 onlookers rose to join in, chanting and swaying.

Women, we are standing firm
to liberate ourselves from
violence, to work together to
change society.

It was International Women's Day at Maissade, a rural farming community in Haiti's Central Plateau of some 45,000 people. It was also the conclusion of the Annual Women's Conference, where members of the area's 107 women's clubs could safely decry the abuse and injustice perpetrated in their homes.

Women in Haiti

The lot of Haitian women is hard. Discriminatory inheritance laws have driven women off the land and into the mire of urban poverty. For those lucky enough to find work as farm labourers, the rewards are scant — women receive only 60 to 75 per cent of what their male counterparts earn.

From early girlhood on, disadvantage and inequality loom. In a 1991 national AIDS survey, 30 per cent of female respondents declared that their first sexual experience had been non-consensual. Wife beating, sometimes to the point of traumatic physical injury, is common.

Stable lifelong unions are rare and men tend to drift casually in and out of relationships. Women without male partners are neither respected nor protected by the law. Since they are dependent in every way on men, they conceive a child quickly when involved with a partner in order to secure some child support or validate the relationship. Their dependency and need thus deprive women of any leverage to negotiate how their partners treat them.

And yet on 8 March, Maissade's nearly 2,000 members of women's groups resolved "to stop raising boys as kings and girls as slaves," and "to militate against a system that does not give women equal rights — in the church, in schools, before the law."

Women's empowerment has long been a goal of Save the Children (SC), a US-based non-governmental organization that has supported agricultural and soil conservation projects in the area since 1986. An initial attempt to establish 'mother's clubs' in 1987 to improve child health roused little enthusiasm, in part because the clubs offered education but no services. In 1989, SC transformed these into women's clubs, enlarging membership and adding commercial incentives. Gradually, a wider range of information and basic services, including reproductive and sexual health, were added. But the clubs grew rapidly — doubling in number — only when they added literacy training and a low-interest credit scheme in 1991.

Literacy challenges status quo

The major attraction of the clubs is the literacy component, which has spawned a consciousness of feminist issues among club members.

The credit scheme is less provocative, because in Haiti, unlike some countries, "giving credit to women is not perceived as a threat to male dominance," according to Valerie Stetson, co-director of SC in Haiti. "A woman's role here is to do the marketing, and men give over their crops to the women to sell and earn money for the family."

Literacy, however, brings independence and confidence. A woman who can read, write and sign her name — skills needed to enter into contracts or acquire professional training — no longer accepts subordination with unquestioning resignation. "Literacy really means giving people power, disrupting the status quo," says Ms. Stetson.

Haitian women find literacy a powerful weapon in their fight for gender equity. Here a mother and daughter stand in their house in the Leogane mountains.

Women have been forming clubs for the express purpose of learning to read and write, although it means their following an intensive two-hour-a-day, five-day-a-week regimen for six months to a year.

Women have few possibilities to congregate, so empowerment is further nurtured by the clubs' sympathetic environment where they can share feelings and experiences. According to Ms. Stetson, "Besides going to church or marketing produce, they don't have permission to do much else." Many of the skits performed at the annual conference stressed the importance of this psychological support system.

The success of the clubs in Maissade is due in good part to the fact that the substance and focus of the movement is defined entirely by Haitian women themselves. There are 107 active clubs with scores more awaiting accreditation by SC, the loan repayment rate stands at 98 per cent, and 85 per cent of literacy graduates have passed the final proficiency test. A study is now under way to gauge the effect of literacy and the club movement on women's attitudes and ways of thinking, self-esteem, partner relations and relations with the external world.

The Maissade programme hinges on the concept of 'gender in development', and calls for a fundamental revision of the existing anachronistic social structures and divisions of labour to meet current socio-economic realities, as opposed to a 'women in development' approach that seeks women's integration into the established order.

Men attended the annual conference and they too performed a skit, extolling the contribution of women, evoking deafening cheers from the crowd. Literacy classes are now being extended to men as well. For the third consecutive year, children soaked up liberating resolutions and applauded the songs and dances of elder sisters, mothers, even grandmothers.

Social evolution is a slow process and even the SC group facilitator concedes that more salient changes will occur on a generational scale. But if we are each the products of our genetic legacy, we are too the sum of our accumulated life experiences.

For the children of Maissade, at least, life may never be the same again.

Jillian Aldebron is a writer and communications specialist working with the Family Health International AIDS Prevention Project in Haiti.

In Benin, learning to read and much more

By Julia Spry-Leverton

The benches are drawn up around the blackboard at the village social centre. By the time Judith and Valerie arrive, the heat of the day cooling into a rosy glow over river and fields, most seats are taken. But both women's husbands have saved them a space, so they slip in, pick up their textbook and join the 25 adults absorbed in reciting a passage.

In front of the class stands Adolphe Djossa. Twice a week he teaches the village's adults to read, write and do basic mathematics in their national language, Fon, as part of Benin's effort to raise its very low (23 per cent) adult literacy rate.

This is only the third session and for the children peeking in, who take their free primary school education for granted, the novelty of seeing their parents poring over texts has not yet worn off.

Judith and Valerie are the only women in the group, encouraged by their husbands to step outside the conventional retiring role for women. "The other women say learning is not for them," report the two women. "They think it is useful only for men. And they claim they have too much work. 'If we were paid', women say, 'we might come!'"

Here, it is the students who must pay. The textbook for the sessions is sold for CFA 50 (17 US cents). Judith and Valerie have to finish their household tasks to be free to attend, yet they are motivated despite the difficulties.

Necessary facts for life

The textbook gives basic information on health and hygiene, illustrated with bold drawings, vital in Benin where 54 per cent of the country's villages are without adequate sanitation or safe water. To ensure that the concepts have been absorbed, a question and answer session follows five minutes of silent reading, then the passage is repeated. Kept at home, the text remains a primer during the months of the course, but later becomes the family's health manual.

Two years of intense promotion via a literacy 'caravan' which toured Benin made the availability of the classes widely known. Engaging the support of local chiefs and leaders to make people aware of the advantages of literacy ensured that recruitment was high. The aim now is to identify and train enough teachers, through two-week courses, to meet the demand in all six of Benin's provinces. UNICEF assists the training effort with teaching materials and stipends.

"Now," says Henri Hessou, Director of Benin's national literacy campaign, "there is a hunger for things to read." Except in the capital, books and magazines are virtually unobtainable. To meet the new readers' needs, UNICEF supplies reading clubs with *Facts for Life*, which is jointly published by UNICEF, WHO, UNESCO and UNFPA.

This resource, describing how to treat or prevent many common illnesses, is used in health education worldwide. In Benin, it has already been translated into 7 of the country's 18 national languages.

Judith and Valerie, who have seen children fall sick and die from recurrent diarrhoeal episodes, will soon learn from *Facts for Life* how to use oral rehydration therapy, a solution of water, sugar and salt, to prevent dehydration and death from diarrhoea. They will also learn that diarrhoea and other illnesses result from unsafe water.

In this fishing village where houses are built on stilts because of the frequent floods, water is abundant, but people are unaware of the dangers that water from the marshes pose.

Following a pattern that has occurred in other Benin villages where literacy has improved, it is likely that active campaigning for a clean water supply in the form of a pump will soon begin. More than 150 pumps have been installed in the southern provinces through a collaborative arrangement with UNICEF, in which a committee under the village chief raises the CFA 60,000 (US$225) needed for installation and management.

Priority goes to villages where dracunculiasis (guinea worm disease) is endemic. Affecting a large swathe of the southern part of the country, this disease is entirely eradicable if drinking water is safe. A national campaign has been launched in Benin to eradicate the disease by the end of the decade.

Thanks to the literacy class, Judith, Valerie and the others will soon be able to read the booklets telling them how to protect themselves from this disease.

Julia Spry-Leverton is a UNICEF consultant who writes on development issues.

A new look at learning

By Rosa María Torres

The term 'basic education' has long existed in the field of education and has been used in many different ways.

In general, basic education means that phase of schooling established as compulsory, the duration and nature of which can vary considerably from one country to another. At present, many countries are trying to lengthen the duration of this phase.

The World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien (Thailand) in 1990, proposed an Expanded Vision of Basic Education. This 'expanded vision' means not only or necessarily increasing the number of years in this phase of education, but also completely changing its meaning. The table at right contrasts this expanded vision with the 'restricted vision' which has thus far taken priority.

To make a commitment to the Education for All initiative and to this expanded vision of basic education means, therefore, not only increasing the number of years of compulsory schooling, but also subscribing to a different way of defining — and therefore providing — education.

Rosa María Torres is Senior Adviser, Non-formal Education, UNICEF New York.

BASIC EDUCATION	
Restricted vision:	**Expanded vision:**
• is aimed at children.	• is aimed at children, young people and adults.
• takes place in a school setting.	• takes place in a school setting, at home or through the media, etc.
• involves primary education or some form of established schooling.	• is not measured by the number of years or certificates but by what is actually learned.
• is carried out through the teaching of set subjects or assignments.	• is carried out by satisfying the basic need to learn.
• is limited to one period in a person's life.	• begins at birth and continues throughout a person's life.
• is homogeneous — the same for all.	• is differentiated (because the basic learning needs of distinct groups and cultures are different).
• is static, remaining relatively unchanged.	• is dynamic and changes over time.
• involves the Ministry of Education.	• involves all Ministries and government departments responsible for education.
• is the responsibility of the State.	• is the responsibility of the State and the whole society, and as such requires building a consensus and coordinating efforts.

EDUCATION NOTES

Teaching on the move

Primary school-age children living in the remote mountains of Cordillera in the Philippines are benefiting from an innovative programme that brings basic education practically to their doorstep. Instead of small children having to hike long distances through rugged terrain, specially trained teachers walk to teaching centres in remote villages, which can consist of anything from an open field to a farmer's house.

About 40 per cent of the children living in the Cordillera mountains have either dropped out or have never attended school. While there are many factors that contribute to the high drop-out rate, the rough terrain and long distances make attending school for many children a monumental chore.

The Mobile Teaching Programme (MTP), started in 1993 and funded by UNICEF, provides not only basic education for the children, but also involves their literate parents as well, who follow up on their children's homework.

The concept of 'mobile teaching' was first tested in the Philippines in 1989 in Ifugao, a mountainous province in the northern Philippines. According to education officials in Ifugao, achievement tests have shown that the pupils of the programme in their area are doing as well, if not better than, students in regular schools. The programme is also helping adults: Non-literate parents, motivated by their children's achievements, are asking to be taught as well.

Translating educational ideas into action

Education and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: The Challenge of Implementation, a new Innocenti Occasional paper by FRANK DALL, Senior Adviser, Education Section, UNICEF New York, examines ways to 'reach the unreached': the 160 million children (70 per cent of whom were girls) still illiterate in 1990. The paper emphasizes the need for creativity in tackling the problems surrounding basic education. Below, the **Escuelas Mayas** in Guatemala and a proposal for **Second Chance Learning Centres** for children in rural areas in Africa are described.

UNICEF-5466/Dutta

Corridors are used as classrooms as a way to solve the problem of overcrowding in this school in West Bengal.

Escuelas Mayas

Tackling one of the greatest educational challenges — reaching ethnic minorities and indigenous populations with special educational needs — the community-run Escuelas Mayas in Guatemala cater successfully to the special cultural and linguistic needs of Mayan children.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child establishes that every child has the right "in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, [and] to use his or her own language" (article 30). In Guatemala, this principle has provided an excellent basis for education.

Escuelas Mayas are private schools — run, supported and financed by members of the community — that combine government-approved and Mayan curricula. They offer instruction in the regional dialect as well as in Spanish. Children of Mayan descent learn about culture, history, music, arts and crafts. Teachers are recruited from local communities and trained in the history of the Mayan culture.

Although 90 per cent of Guatemala's population is of Mayan descent, classes in state schools are taught in Spanish. Languages and cultural diversity are the major problems encountered in assisting Mayan children. There are 22 Mayan languages, which include 200 dialects.

Prior to the introduction of Escuelas Mayas, only 30 per cent of school-aged children attended primary school. Many communities had no schools and most children worked.

Involving parents has been important in the success of the new schools. Each school is trying to develop its own curriculum in the local Mayan dialect, using whatever resources are available and affordable within the community. Parents and neighbours plan the school hours so that children can work when needed. Most schools have high female enrolment. Girls tend to stay in school until they finish their primary education; some even continue with their secondary education.

The popularity of the Mayan schools extends to non-Mayan families, some of whom send their children to these schools in preference over state schools. The schools' Mayan cultural content and bilingual instruction serve as a model for reaching Mayan speaking communities with an appropriate and culturally acceptable education.

Second Chance Learning Centres

Community involvement is critical in this proposed strategy for giving children in sub-Saharan Africa who drop out of school a second chance to learn.

In most African countries, especially in the sub-Saharan region, many children drop out of primary school before they complete a minimum of four years. Second Chance Learning Centres, which are targeted mainly at school drop-outs between 9 and 15 years of age who live in rural areas, are a cost-effective method of making basic education services accessible to out-of-school children.

Modelled after the Djamma Centres, developed in Conakry (Guinea), Second Chance Learning Centres are flexible and community-based. The centres are to be established in buildings donated by each participating community. A government or donor can grant funds to meet the cost of refurbishing and preparing each facility.

Unemployed secondary school graduates or other individuals with secondary level or equivalent education can be recruited from each participating community to serve as teacher-facilitators. They are to be paid a stipend for their services to the community, and time served will be credited towards further training in the vocational area. The young women and men selected to teach need to be given well-designed, short but highly focused practical training courses in teaching methods.

It has been proposed that four countries be identified to participate in the first demonstration phase of this project. An area-based approach will be used, and precedence will be given to rural areas with high drop-out rates and elevated gender disparities. During the first three years of implementation, no more than five centres will be established in each of the four countries. Together these 20 centres are expected to benefit approximately 20,000 school drop-outs.

The performance of each centre will be monitored and an evaluation made at the end of three years to determine whether further investment is warranted for 'going to scale'. If the evaluation is positive, separate funding will be sought from local and international sources for expansion and maintenance of already existing centres.

Anaemia high in Romania

By Denise A. Arnold

Almost all of Romania's children below two years of age are anaemic, according to a survey on their growth, micronutrient status and HIV prevalence, as well as the reproductive history of their mothers.

The 1991 survey indicated that although energy intake (number of calories) was adequate, children's diets lacked appropriate amounts of iron, especially for youngsters under two years of age. The survey was conducted by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Program Against Micronutrient Malnutrition (PAMM) at Emory University, both of Atlanta, Georgia (USA), at the request of the Romanian Ministry of Health and the UNICEF office in Romania.

The serious nutritional deficiencies in Romanian children are the result of the changing political situation and economic turmoil in the country, as well as policies of the former government, according to a report prepared by two Romanian paediatricians, Drs. Tatiana Ciomartin and Mihai Ambrosa. Because of unplanned pregnancies and economic constraints, many unwanted children sent to state institutions under the previous government, in particular, ran the risk of dietary deficiencies in iron and other micronutrients.

Iron deficiency as a national priority

The survey findings have sparked action, leading to the creation of a paediatric nutrition surveillance system and the provision of iron supplementation, both funded by UNICEF.

Dr. Ciomartin, with training by PAMM and assistance from CDC, coordinates the surveillance system, which assesses children's height, weight and haemoglobin status and monitors the success of the iron supplementation project for infants.

The hopes are to expand the nutrition surveillance system and anaemia intervention project nationwide, encourage breastfeeding until at least six months of age, support the consumption of iron-rich foods and spur local industries to produce fortified foods, according to Dr. Ciomartin.

Romania's overall strategic plan is comprehensive, including advocacy, training of health workers, social marketing, and data collection and analysis, but many obstacles remain. Convincing politicians and industry leaders to give high priority to the fortification of foods, in light of the serious economic problems the country faces, is a major challenge.

Yet, the costs of ending iron deficiency are minimal compared to the long-term costs of anaemia as a health and social problem. Dr. Ray Yip, Chief of the Maternal and Child Health Branch in CDC's Division of Nutrition, explained that for every 1 per cent of iron deficiency in the population, millions of dollars in income are lost for the country. And with better nutrition, families are less likely to have to face the burden of low-birth-weight babies, the impaired physical or mental development of children and poor health in general.

Denise A. Arnold is a Communications Consultant for the Program against Micronutrient Malnutrition at the Emory University School of Public Health, in Atlanta, Georgia (USA).

Ukraine on the edge

By John Richardson

Rapid economic decline in Ukraine has resulted in deteriorating health standards for mothers and children. Given the country's resources, a National Committee may one day be established, but for now, UNICEF is advocating the formation of an Alliance for Children to focus immediate attention on ways to protect Ukrainian children.

UNICEF-96-16/Sprague

The economic, social and political transformations taking place in Ukraine have posed severe problems for the country's children. Here two Ukrainian children walk outside a refugee camp.

Until two years ago, Ukraine was the economic core of the Soviet Union, providing more than half of the country's agricultural and dairy products and accounting for a major part of industrial output.

Independent since 1991, Ukraine is now one of the largest countries in Europe, with a population of 52 million, most of them well educated. It has stumbled, however, into an economic free fall, turning average Ukrainians from secure citizens into paupers overnight.

In this new climate, the greatest health dangers facing children today are in the areas of nutrition and immunization. Vitamin deficiencies and anaemia are two of the most common problems cited in both mothers and newborns, leaving them weaker and more susceptible to illness.

At a polyclinic in a village 20 kilometres north of Kiev, doctors and nurses report an increasing number of Caesarean operations because many women are not strong enough to give birth by themselves.

According to doctors at the Kiev Institute of Paediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, only 30 per cent of newborns are considered healthy; the remaining 70 per cent have functional disorders or some ailment. The deterioration of family budgets has also led to an increase in anaemia and vitamin deficiencies (mostly A and C), which can be expected to worsen. Meanwhile, shortages of vaccine supplies from Russia have already led to an outbreak of diphtheria that was averted by vaccines provided by UNICEF and other donors.

While it is difficult to assess the quality and extent of social assistance programmes, traditional government programmes still focus primarily on the needs of orphans, the handicapped and sick children. They fail to address the social problems that are emerging — child prostitution, and an increase in the number of street children and abused or neglected children.

A sign of hope

While a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have emerged to respond to the needs of children, a broader policy framework to cover children's full civil and legal rights is needed in the Ukraine.

Most NGOs have few resources and in the absence of legislative reform cannot open bank accounts and offer tax deductions for charitable donations. Unsure of their ability to affect parliamentary or government action in the areas of children's rights and social welfare reform, many are looking for support from international organizations such as UNICEF.

Paving the way towards future collaboration, a three-person UNICEF mission from the National Committee Section in the Geneva Office joined a dozen NGOs in a meeting sponsored by the United Nations Office in Kiev in late January. They agreed to form an Alliance for Children that would coordinate efforts among concerned organizations and individuals in governmental, non-governmental and private sectors, and promised to provide the UNICEF office in Geneva with an organizational plan of action.

The Alliance for Children was seen as a middle path towards a future relationship between Ukraine and UNICEF that is still uncertain. It remains unclear whether Ukraine will move in the direction of its neighbours in Eastern Europe and the Baltic and establish a National Committee, or whether the deteriorating economic situation will ultimately justify the kind of programme assistance that the southern republics now get from UNICEF. Either way, the Alliance for Children can provide a solid foundation.

John Richardson, a consultant for UNICEF, travelled recently to Ukraine.

Report cites growing problems in Eastern Europe

A new report, **Public Policy and Social Conditions: Central and Eastern Europe in Transition**, reveals that the economic and social reforms, planned or under way in Eastern Europe, involve social, economic and political costs that are far greater than anticipated. The report is the first in a series to be produced at regular intervals by the Monitoring the Transition in Central and Eastern Europe (MONEE) project. MONEE was initiated by the Florence-based UNICEF International Child Development Centre (ICDC) in late 1992. Its principal aim is to fill an information and policy analysis gap in the current debate on the Eastern European transition regarding changes in social conditions and policy.

The spread of poverty, decreasing number of births, escalation of death rates, decline in school enrolments and an unstoppable crime wave have reached alarming proportions in Eastern and South-eastern Europe. Between 1989 and 1993, for instance, the crude death rate increased by 17 per cent in Romania, by 12 per cent in Bulgaria, by commensurate amounts in Albania and Ukraine, and by a startling 32 per cent in Russia, according to the report.

In Russia, the number of deaths in 1993 exceeded those in 1989 by 547,000, a figure that demonstrates the gravity of the crisis. In relative terms, the problems appear even more acute than those recorded in Africa and Latin America during the lost decade of the 1980s.

How is the crisis affecting children? According to Giovanni Andrea Cornia, Director of the Economic and Social Policy Research Programme at ICDC, the impact varies considerably from one country to another. In fully half of the countries analysed, infant mortality rates have increased, there is evidence of stunting from reduced calorie intake, and the proportion of children in primary school is declining. Children face greater risks of being orphaned, and the proportion of children born to single mothers is rising. Institutions entrusted with child health care, socialization and leisure have been severely weakened. Another disturbing sign is the skyrocketing adolescent crime rate in some countries.

For a copy of the report, contact: UNICEF International Child Development Centre, Piazza SS Annunziata 12, 50122 Florence, Italy. Tel: 39.55.23.45.258; fax: 39.55.24.48.17.

Popul

UNICEF/5215/Toubiana

The health, education and well-being of young people are among the issues that will be addressed at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo.

New report warns: 'Teenagers are in trouble'

Adolescents are at a crucial stage of development and require care and compassion from adults. A new report, *Understanding Adolescents*, from the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), examines the tragic results of the failure to support adolescents in dealing with one critical aspect of their development — their sexuality. Consider the facts:

• **Early child-bearing.** The main causes of death for 15- to 19-year-old women worldwide are pregnancy related. The risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth is much greater for girls under 18 because their bodies are not fully developed and they are also less likely to receive early and adequate prenatal care. In Bangladesh, girls as young as 12 years marry and 80 per cent of girls have given birth by age 20. In Central American countries, with the exception of Costa Rica, up to two thirds of young women from 15 to 19 years old will have a child. In the United States, there are more than 1 million adolescent pregnancies, with more than 450,000 of them ending in abortion.

• **Unwanted pregnancies.** Adolescent pregnancies are often unplanned and unwanted. In Algeria and Morocco, for example, 2,000 unwanted babies are abandoned every year by young unmarried mothers. The social consequences can be severe, and many young women turn to abortion as a way to avoid being forced out of school or even out of their homes. At the Kenyatta National Hospital in Nairobi, 60 per cent of abortion patients are either school girls or unemployed young women. In many developing countries where abortion is illegal, young women often resort to unsafe procedures which can result in haemorrhage, chronic pelvic infection, infertility and death.

• **Sexually transmitted diseases.** The World Health Organization reports that one in 20 adolescents contract STDs each year. Every year in the United States, 2.5 million teenagers are infected. In Russia, students and school children made up 10 per cent of syphilis patients in 1992. In Brazil, where an estimated 24 million children live or work in the streets, about 2 per cent are believed to be infected with HIV.

• **Sexual exploitation and abuse.** Homelessness or economic hardship has led millions of children — some much younger than 15 — to become victims of sexual exploitation or abuse through street prostitution and involvement with 'sugar daddies' who provide money or gifts for sexual favours. Female genital mutilation is another form of abuse practised in many countries in Africa and the Middle East, affecting over 100 million women. Carried out mainly on very young girls, it can lead to infection and haemorrhage and long-term effects on reproductive and general health.

Does sex education lead to increased sexual activity in youth?

A review of 19 international studies* indicated that there was **no evidence** that sex education leads to earlier or increased sexual activity in youth. Six studies found that sex education led either to a delay in the onset of sexual activity or to a decrease in overall sexual activity. In 10 studies, sex education was found to foster safer practices in sexually active youth. School programmes which helped youth postpone sex and explained protected sex were found to be more effective than those promoting abstinence alone. School-based education programmes were also found to be more effective when offered before young people had become sexually active and when skills and social norms were emphasized rather than abstract knowledge.

** In collaboration with the National Centre in HIV Social Research, Macquarie University, Australia; the Institute of Population Studies, University of Exeter, UK; the Psychology Department, Bowling Green State University, USA.*

One fifth of the world's children live in China. One of the most important investme

Estimated and projected populations (in millions) by size by region, (1970-2025): The world's population has grown at a steady 1.7 per cent a year since 1975 and is expected to total 6.25 billion people in the year 2000; 8.5 billion in 2025; and 10 billion in 2050. By 2150, there will be an estimated 11.6 billion people in the world. Between now and the end of the century, 95 per cent of all population growth will occur in developing countries.

Regions	1970	1990	2000	2025
World Total	3,698 (100.0)	5,292 (100.0)	6,261 (100.0)	8,504 (100.0)
Industrialized countries	1,049 (28.4)	1,207 (22.8)	1,264 (20.2)	1,354 (15.9)
Developing countries	2,649 (71.6)	4,086 (77.2)	4,997 (79.8)	7,150 (84.1)
Africa	362 (9.8)	642 (12.1)	867 (13.8)	1,597 (18.8)
North America	226 (6.1)	276 (5.2)	295 (4.7)	332 (3.9)
Latin America	286 (7.7)	448 (8.5)	538 (8.6)	757 (8.9)
Asia	2,102 (56.8)	3,113 (58.8)	3,713 (59.3)	4,912 (57.8)
Europe	460 (12.4)	498 (9.4)	510 (8.1)	515 (6.1)
Oceania	19 (0.5)	26 (0.5)	30 (0.5)	38 (0.4)
USSR (former)	243 (6.6)	289 (5.5)	308 (4.9)	352 (4.1)

Education and prenatal care: Studies have shown that familly plannin alone will not adequately curb population growth and that education and prenat care are essential to success.

	Countries with a higher female education index*...	...tend to have a lower infant mortality rate...	... and a lower fertility rate...
Japan	95.7	5 deaths/1,000 births	1.6 children/woman
France	99.7	7	1.8
United States	97.7	9	1.9
Thailand	66.5	27	2.5
China	67.0	29	2.5
Zimbabwe	66.2	49	4.9
Kenya	57.0	67	6.5
India	50.4	92	4.0
Namibia	72.2	100	5.9
Rwanda	50.2	120	8

* The female education index is based on measurements of the enrolment of girls in primary and secondary school, d ences in enrollment between girls and boys, and the average level of schooling attained by women.

Reprinted from *The New York Times, 13 April 1994* (source: United Nations).

cts and fallacies

UNICEF/Sprague

s a country can make in its own future is to provide education for its children.

World's 20 largest agglomerations ranked by population size in millions by the year 2000: By the year 2015, nearly 56 per cent of all people are expected to live in urban areas, compared to fewer than 45 per cent in 1994. The most rapid urbanization will occur in developing countries. In 1975, 26 per cent of people in developing countries lived in urban areas; by 2015 the figure is projected to rise to 50 per cent. A third of the world's urban population lives in cities of more than 1 million inhabitants. 'Megacities' are a phenomena of the last 20 years: In 1950, 3 of the 10 largest metropolitan areas were in the developing world. None had more than 13 million inhabitants. By the end of the 1990s, 7 of the 10 will be in the developing world and will have populations in excess of 13 million.

Rank	Agglomerations	Countries	Est. Population in 2000 (millions)
1	MEXICO CITY	MEXICO	25.6
2	SAO PAULO	BRAZIL	22.1
3	TOKYO	JAPAN	19.0
4	SHANGHAI	CHINA	17.0
5	NEW YORK	USA	16.8
6	CALCUTTA	INDIA	15.7
7	BOMBAY	INDIA	15.4
8	BEIJING	CHINA	14.0
9	LOS ANGELES	USA	13.9
10	JAKARTA	INDONESIA	13.7
11	DELHI	INDIA	13.2
12	BUENOS AIRES	ARGENTINA	12.9
13	LAGOS	NIGERIA	12.9
14	TIANJIN	CHINA	12.7
15	SEOUL	REPUBLIC OF KOREA	12.7
16	RIO DE JANEIRO	BRAZIL	12.5
17	DHAKA	BANGLADESH	12.2
18	CAIRO	EGYPT	11.8
19	METRO MANILA	PHILIPPINES	11.8
20	KARACHI	PAKISTAN	11.7

• A younger world

There are far more young people in the world: 1.7 billion under the age of 15 in 1990, compared to 700 million in 1950.

Under-15-year-olds comprise 40 per cent of the population in eastern, central and western Africa, rising from 89 million in 1950 to 281 million today. In Latin America, the proportion of under-15-year-olds peaked in 1965-1970 at over 40 per cent of total population and has been falling rapidly since. In Asia, the proportion of under-15s has also declined, most rapidly in East Asia, where it is now about 26 per cent (366 million). In south Asia, by comparison, the proportion is still about 39 per cent — resulting in a total of some 496 million young people under the age of 15.

• Migration

The United Nations estimated that in 1989 some 50 million people — 1 per cent of the world's population — lived outside their country of origin. In 1992, 100 million people were international migrants, according to World Bank estimates.

The source for the figures and material on population is *The State of the World Population 1993*, a report published by the United Nations Population Fund.

International Conference on Population and Development

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in meeting individual needs, especially of women, and in bringing population into balance with available resources.

An unprecedented growth in human numbers; widespread poverty; social, economic and gender inequality; and wasteful consumption patterns are increasing human suffering, depleting the earth's resources and intensifying environmental degradation. There is growing international recognition that these problems are inseparable, and that the quality of life of current and future generations hinges on how well the development process responds to all of them.

At the final meeting of the ICPD Preparatory Committee in New York this April, delegations from 170 countries agreed on most of the wording of a draft Programme of Action to be finalized in Cairo. Its 16 chapters spell out an enlightened approach to a broad range of population and development themes, including:

• **The interrelationships between population, sustained economic growth and sustainable development.** Economic and development strategies to alleviate poverty, curb wasteful consumption and protect the environment are all closely connected to population growth and cannot be addressed effectively in isolation.

• **Gender equality, equity and empowerment of women.** These are recognized as fundamental human rights on their own and as prerequisites of sustainable development. The major goals in this regard are to educate women and girls and raise their status, and to increase men's responsibility in matters of family planning and child-rearing.

• **The family, its roles, composition and structure.** The draft Programme recognizes that family structures and composition are increasingly diverse, and that families in difficult circumstances need increased social and economic support.

• **Population growth and structure.** World population is 5.7 billion and growing by over 90 million persons a year. In many countries, high fertility and declining mortality have resulted in young populations, guaranteeing that rapid growth will continue well into the next century; actions taken over the next 20 years will determine how large a total will be reached before human numbers stabilize. Proposed actions will focus on the health, education and well-being of young people, and on the needs of the elderly, indigenous people and persons with disabilities.

• **Reproductive rights, sexual and reproductive health and family planning.** Family planning programmes must aim to establish the widest possible freedom of choice in matters of procreation; coercion has no part to play. Government programmes should assist individuals in ensuring that all pregnancies and all children are wanted. Prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, promotion of equitable sexual relations, and the provision of reproductive health information and services to adolescents are also crucial to safeguarding reproductive rights.

• **Health, morbidity and mortality.** Primary health care systems must be strengthened to better guarantee the survival and health of infants and children, reduce maternal morbidity and mortality and prevent HIV/AIDS. Unsafe abortion is a leading cause of maternal death and health problems; there is widespread agreement that it should be treated as such.

• **Population distribution, urbanization and internal migration.** Migration from rural areas to cities is contributing to phenomenal urban growth. To slow that trend, ICPD will emphasize the need to reduce urban-rural inequality, foster environmentally sustainable development of rural areas and small- and medium-sized cities and better manage cities to improve the quality of life of the urban poor.

UNFPA

Dr. Nafis Sadik, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Secretary General of the International Conference on Population and Development.

• **International migration.** Actions are needed to reduce undocumented migration by addressing its root causes, especially those related to poverty; encourage more cooperation between sending and receiving countries; ensure the well-being and social integration of documented migrants; protect both the documented and undocumented from racism and xenophobia; and to find durable solutions to the plight of refugees and displaced persons.

• **Population, development and education.** Among the educational goals the Conference will emphasize are universal primary schooling and literacy; job training; elimination of gender disparities; and greater awareness of population, development and health issues, leading to necessary actions and responsible behaviour.

Political commitment to population and development goals is essential to implementation of the actions outlined above. The ICPD Programme will emphasize the need to actively involve parliamentarians, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), grass-roots groups and individuals in national policies and programmes. The unprecedented degree of NGO involvement in the ICPD preparatory process is an encouraging indication of this type of cooperation.

ICPD will consider adopting a set of realistic 20-year goals in regard to reducing mortality, making family planning information and services universally available and enabling all children to complete at least primary education. The proposed goals build upon goals for the year 2000 agreed to at previous international forums, including the 1990 World Summit for Children.

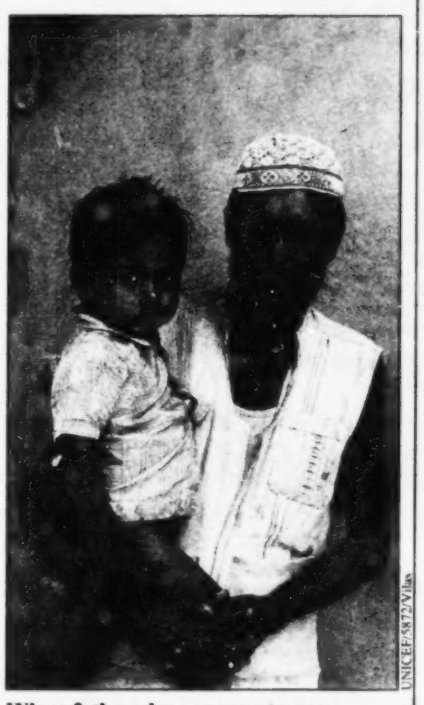
If the Conference objectives are to be met, resources for population and development programmes will need to increase substantially. The developing countries themselves will continue to provide the bulk of these resources, but international assistance will have to account for up to one third, a share projected to total US$5.7 billion in the year 2000 and US$7.2 billion in 2015 (in 1993 dollars). In recent months, Japan and the United States have each pledged to raise their support of population programmes significantly. I am hopeful that after the Cairo conference, other donors will follow their lead.

Dr. Nafis Sadik is Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Secretary General of the International Conference on Population and Development.

Fathers expand their role in India

By Meenakshi M. Gautham

As the world celebrates the International Year of the Family, the role of fathers is inspiring fresh examination. In New Delhi, one programme helps fathers assume their place as nurturers, educators and sources of emotional support.



UNICEF/5872/Vilas

When fathers become nurturers, educators and sources of emotional support, they can dramatically improve the lives of their children.

Every week Jagdish Prasad and Ram Subhash Tiwari meet with an educational consultant, learning about their children's capabilities and weaknesses and discovering new ways of supporting their education.

Both fathers make it a point to spend time with their children each day — explaining, discussing, telling stories, joking and playing. Among other things, Mr. Prasad taught his son Vijay, who is in the third grade, how to use a dictionary to improve his English.

Their new active role is possible because of an innovative programme introduced by the owner of the garment factory in New Delhi, where the men work. Under the programme, employees who have completed seven or more years of service are reimbursed school fees for two of their children, and a child development consultant, engaged by the company, monitors the children's scholastic progress. So far, 17 of the 18 participating workers are fathers; 31 children (ranging in age from pre-school to adolescents) are benefiting.

As parents become active participants in their children's education, the children themselves begin to exhibit a positive attitude towards school and towards scholastic achievement.

New traditions for girls

Since the programme began, fathers have also proven to be powerful collaborators in combating social evils and superstitious beliefs. Jagdish Prasad resisted both his neighbours and his wife, who advocated the use of witchcraft when his six-year-old daughter Urmila fell ill. Urmila was actually deficient in vitamin A and suffering from infections, and she recovered rapidly after intensive hospital care.

Stronger relationships are another of the programme's results. "Papa tells me stories," Urmila said with a shy grin, dressed in her maroon and grey school uniform as she prepared to visit the circus with her father and brother.

In fact, supporting the health and educational rights of girls has been particularly rewarding for many of these fathers, who come from backgrounds where child marriages are usual and female literacy is discouraged.

Mr. Prasad has successfully outmanoeuvred marriage proposals for Urmila. He now wants his own wife to work outside the household, not for monetary reasons alone, but so that she can be his partner in planning the family's future.

Week after week Beleshwar Puri spends four tedious hours in crowded buses to travel halfway across town with his four-year-old hearing impaired daughter, Pramila, to provide her with quality diagnostic and rehabilitation support. Mr. Puri also ensures that others in the family heed the therapist's advice with respect to the child's well-being.

Chander Pal, father of two boys aged 8 and 10, understands that unhealthy comparisons between children can be damaging, and has taken precautions so that it does not occur within his household. Another father, Raj Ahuja, helps his three-year-old daughter cope with the trauma of sibling rivalry.

The programme, brainchild of entrepreneur Vikram Nair, is growing in popularity, with many non-participants eagerly requesting counselling and guidance for their own children.

Meenakshi M. Gautham is a child development consultant in New Delhi.

Girls at risk in Uganda

By Lillian Mulder Lubega

"My eight-year-old daughter Jane was defiled by my neighbour's son one evening as she was coming back from school," Andrew, the girl's father, said. "I reported the case to the police but nothing has happened yet. I fear to push the case further because I do not want to get into a conflict with my neighbour. So I have suggested that we settle the matter quietly."

Cases of defilement or sexual abuse of girls are reported every week in newspapers in Uganda. The problem of AIDS makes the incidence even more alarming: Current data indicate that HIV infection rates are six times higher among young girls than among boys.

According to a UNICEF-funded study, 'Children and their rights: Village perceptions', conducted in seven districts of Uganda, the most prevalent form of child abuse is the practice of child marriages.

In some parts of the country, young girls are forced or kidnapped into marriages. Because many girls do not attend school, they become easy prey. Poverty also makes them vulnerable, especially in rural areas, with parents eager to obtain the money or cattle and other property traditionally given by prospective in-laws to a girl's family. But perhaps the most significant cause of sexual abuse of girls is the low status of women and children and their relative lack of rights.

Generally, because the law enforcement and justice systems are male dominated, offenders are let off lightly, even though the law on defilement calls for capital punishment. In many instances, the victims are afraid to testify in open court: The process of questioning is intimidating to girls already traumatized by the crime and often fails to elicit necessary evidence. The police and local councils are often uncooperative, and many parents prefer to settle the matter out of court.

Efforts to protect children

Since the 1990 World Summit for Children, children's issues have figured prominently on the Government's agenda. The National Council for Children (NCC), formed in November 1993, is responsible for advocacy and coordination of child welfare activities, as well as for monitoring the situation of children in the context of the Uganda National Plan of Action for Children (UNPAC).

Uganda has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and has incorporated provisions for protecting child rights in its new draft constitution. Parliament has also passed a bill making the vice-chairman of each local council responsible for children's affairs, and the Government approved the recommendation of the Child Law Review Committee for all laws pertaining to children to be updated.

This year, the NCC will start developing district plans of action to identify the major problems affecting women and children in each district. Areas of concern include literacy and school enrolment, access to and the quality of health care, household poverty and women's financial status, the quality of parenting and concerns of orphans.

Still, in a national assessment of the situation of women and children in Uganda, districts cited the need to strengthen their capacity to protect children, particularly against defilement.

As a first step, all members of local councils will be sensitized to better understand the rights of the child and identify ways in which they can effectively and appropriately handle child-related issues, especially defilement.

"In some cases by-laws have been passed to reinforce existing laws and I think this is one of the ways the issue of child defilement can best be handled," says David Pulkol, Secretary General Designate for the NCC and also Deputy Minister of Education and Sports. Some districts are already training paralegals to provide counselling and referral at the community level.

Cases of defilement or sexual abuse of girls are reported every week in newspapers in Uganda.

Uganda Women Lawyers, and other non-governmental organizations, are increasing advocacy activities to ensure that child defilement becomes everyone's concern. In addition, they are setting up a children's desk to deal with these cases and have now recommended to the Judicial Commission of Inquiries that defilement cases not be tried in open court, to reduce psychological trauma and stigmatization.

Lillian Mulder Lubega is Information Officer, UNICEF Kampala.

HEALTH NOTES

Tuberculosis crisis neglected: With 3 million people dying each year from the disease, tuberculosis will have killed at least 30 million people between 1990 and 1999, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). This makes tuberculosis the leading infectious killer of adults (causing more deaths than AIDS, diarrhoea, malaria and other tropical diseases combined), and nearly 300,000 children die each year from it. Yet the disease receives the least amount of funding of all the infectious diseases, a group of illnesses already underfunded, leading WHO to call it "the world's most neglected health crisis."

Women and mental health: Women suffer more mental health problems than men do, and are much more likely to be admitted to mental health facilities, according to a report produced by WHO, the Melbourne-based Key Centre for Women's Health in Society and the WHO Collaborating Centre for Women and Health.

The report states that poverty, low social status and domestic violence all contribute to increased stress and depression in women. During childhood, females are more commonly abused than males, and one fifth of abused children show serious psychological and behavioural disorders.

The report goes on to say that pregnancy puts an additional strain on women, while abortion, miscarriage and stillbirth are likely to affect a woman's emotional health for years.

Puppets spread health messages: In Indonesia, the art of *Wayang*, or puppetry, is spreading the word on immunization, oral rehydration therapy, safe pregnancy and sanitation. *Wayang* is used in traditional shadow plays with narratives derived from the Hindu epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. While the puppets are the key players, the real star is the *dalang* — or master storyteller — who brings audiences the life-saving messages. With assistance from UNICEF, the Indonesian Government's Centre for Health Education and the Dalang Association have developed a manual that teaches *dalangs* to weave important life-management messages into their performances.

The manual will first be used to train key *dalangs* and will then be distributed to some 3,000 *dalangs* around the country.

Reducing SIDS deaths: Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) refers to the sudden and unexpected death of an apparently healthy infant usually less than one year of age. The cause of SIDS has still not been determined, but at the end of last year, the Canadian Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths, the Canadian Institute of Child Health, the Canadian Paediatric Society and Health Canada has issued the following recommendations to reduce the risk of SIDS: Normal healthy babies should be placed on their back or side for sleep; they should be cared for in a smoke-free environment; they should be dressed and covered in a manner to avoid overheating; and all women should be encouraged to breast-feed their babies. In Canada, there are about 400 SIDS deaths each year, making SIDS the leading cause of death among infants.

UNICEF-McBean

Rather than allow these children to roam the streets at night, a police inspector lets them sleep each evening in an open jail cell. From left to right stand Raji, Pedro, Frank, Salim and Salvador in their sleeping quarters in Paramaribo (Suriname).

Police shelter Suriname's children in prison cells

By George McBean

For the past two months, eight-year-old Frank* and his four new friends have slept on wooden bunk-beds in a prison cell in Suriname.

The five sleep there, not because they have committed any crime, but because the prison cell offers these children, all under 12 and abandoned by their parents, better shelter than they can find on the streets of the capital, Paramaribo.

* The names of the children in this article have been changed.

No one is more aware of these children's predicament than Ms. Lucretia Redan, the Police Inspector who first opened the cell door to house them and who is prepared to bend the rules to protect children.

Children at risk pose a new and growing problem for Suriname, which sits on the shoulder of South America. The country is struggling through the worst economic recession in its 19-year history since independence from the Netherlands, which is straining the over-burdened welfare system. The rest of the cells at the Youth Affairs Prison in Paramaribo are occupied by young offenders who began their life of crime on the streets after being neglected at home or abandoned.

"I know it will be a matter of time before these boys are arrested and brought here anyway, for stealing food or goods to sell for their survival," says Ms. Redan of Frank and the four others. "I open the cell each morning and let them go free, but each night they return because they have nowhere else to go."

For Frank, each day is lived for what it can offer, as he tests his fate on the streets and dreams of his chances for the future: a large hand-out from a passer-by, a chance of employment, a rich benefactor, a new set of caring parents. In the absence of any such luck, Ms. Redan's accommodation is the best available alternative.

Daily, Frank and others like him face harassment, rejection from the over-crowded children's homes and invitations to sell themselves into prostitution. Raji, an 11-year-old, has already been sexually molested on the street, and Salvador, whose mother is in the United States seeking a better life, has been abandoned by his aunt.

Increasingly, this is the cruel reality for many children in this once affluent country. Suriname now competes with both Haiti and Guyana for the rank of poorest nation in the Western hemisphere.

Dependent on bauxite export revenues, Suriname has seen per capita income drop from approximately US$2,111 in 1980 to US$500 in 1993 because of falling world prices for aluminium. Civil conflict, economic mismanagement and runaway inflation compound the problem.

The benefits of assisting children in trouble far outweigh the costs for the country: The expense of imprisoning a child who has broken the law is comparable to that of providing him support before he seeks a life of crime. Turning a blind eye to the problems of these children invites an eventual face-to-face confrontation in the court room at a much greater cost to society.

With an estimated 1,000 children being picked up by police on the streets last year, insight and boldness on the part of the authorities is needed to creatively tackle the situation, like the spirit displayed by Inspector Redan.

George McBean is Information/ Communication Officer, UNICEF Barbados.

PUBLICATIONS

UNICEF launches *The Progress of Nations 1994*

In its annual scoresheet of social progress, UNICEF ranks all nations according to their accomplishments in health, nutrition, education, family planning and progress for women, and details once again the achievements of developing and industrialized countries in recent years and the challenges that remain.

The Progress of Nations 1994 looks specifically at what has happened to the promises made by political leaders at the 1990 World Summit for Children. The report points out, for example, that there are some 3.5 million children growing up healthy in the developing world who would have been crippled by polio were it not for the immunization successes over the last few years. Child deaths from measles have been cut, as well, from 3 million to 1 million as a consequence of improved nutrition and a worldwide effort to lift vaccine coverage to 80 per cent. And another 1 million under-five deaths from dehydration caused by diarrhoeal disease are being prevented each year as oral rehydration therapy (ORT) now reaches approximately 38 per cent of families.

There is insufficient progress, however, towards eliminating neonatal tetanus — a disease that is among the simplest and cheapest to prevent — the report says. It also indicates that efforts must be accelerated in many nations to ensure universal primary education and most especially education for girls.

Some of the worst violations of child rights are documented as well, including the growth of the sex-tourism industry and the rising number of child prostitutes, estimated at more than 1 million in Asia alone.

Available from UNICEF, 3 UN Plaza H-9F, New York, NY 10017, USA.

Anti-personnel Land-mines: A Scourge on Children describes how tens of millions of land-mines are maiming and killing children in more than 60 countries. The book explains the importance of mine awareness projects to protect vulnerable communities and discusses current international efforts to ban the production, sale and export of these deadly devices.

Available for US$5.95 from UNICEF, 3 UN Plaza, H-9F, New York, NY 10017, USA.

Children of War: Wandering Alone in Southern Sudan is the story of how more than 20,000 courageous boys, fleeing the war in southern Sudan, have survived on their own. Vulnerable and defenceless, they have lived with hunger, stress, insecurity and military domination for most of their lives. Some have neither seen nor heard from their families for as many as eight years. The book describes the struggle and the hopes of these young survivors.

Available for US$3.95 from UNICEF, 3 UN Plaza, H-9F, New York, NY 10017, USA.

Reaching rural Guinea by radio

By Katri Simonen

"A terrible gale is blowing, threatening to carry away all the children of the village. Fortunately, big brother has something that can tame the gale and save the children. What is it?"

Pilimini Diallo, the broadcaster from the rural radio station in central Guinea posing the question, sits under a tree as the villagers and schoolchildren of the village of Misside-Tiga stare at him solemnly. The quiz is being recorded for later broadcast as far as Mali and Senegal.

"Do you like the prizes," Mr. Diallo asks, pointing to soap, sugar, a piece of material, an oil lamp, and — first prize — a transistor radio. "If you do, please clap your hands." The applause is thunderous.

Few material goods are be found in the thatched huts of Guinea's countryside, but many people have radios. The three-hour broadcasts of Guinea's Rural Radio are exceedingly popular and varied.

"The right answer is the injection needle," says Mr. Diallo. "It will save the children of their village."

Some 10 villagers knew the right answer, so Mr. Diallo begins the process of elimination, asking who will give parents the best advice on immunization.

Illness, malnourishment, epidemic diseases, as well as the worries of parents are revealed in the answers. All the speakers get handsome applause.

A little boy replies, "Immunization is like covering your hut with a dense thatched roof, so that when the rain comes, the water doesn't fall into the hut."

A jury of the most esteemed members of the community narrows down the contestants to six finalists, all of whom must speak about the importance of immunization in the form of a song or a poem.

The imam and the onion farmer

Founded just a few years ago, Guinea's Rural Radio has a clear programme policy: to maximize community participation by using local people as communicators.

"If *I* talk about family planning or ways to stop onions from spoiling, who will listen to me?" asks Cheik Sylla, Director of Rural Radio. "But if the imam talks, or the onion farmer, their advice will be taken. The idea is to have people give advice to the people."

Guinea's Rural Radio was developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the Swiss Radio Romande (which donated equipment to all four stations); the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); UNICEF, WHO, UNESCO and UNFPA (joint publishers of *Facts for Life*, which was used for training the reporters); and the European Union.

"If FAO wants to campaign against termites, UNICEF for breastfeeding or another organization against AIDS, all will seek cooperation with Rural Radio," says Mr. Sylla.

Katri Simonen is a freelance journalist in Finland who visited Guinea through the Finnish Committee for UNICEF.

Worm infections impede child development

Intestinal worms are one of the most common infections in the world. They are frequently found in and cause the most intense effects among school-age children. These parasites dramatically affect children's health, growth, nutritional status and cognitive development and impede their ability to take full advantage of education. DR. BERYL LEVINGER, Director of the International Basic Education Programs at the Education Development Center, Inc. (Massachusetts, USA), argues that the treatment and prevention of worm infections must become a priority in many countries in the developing world.

Roundworm and whipworm are estimated to infect one quarter of the world's population, 700 million of them school-aged children. Hookworm infection and schistosomes impair the health and development of an additional 260 million children.

Treatment and prevention of such infections can not only reduce school absenteeism, under-enrolment and attrition, but also dramatically improve children's capacity to learn.

Each of these parasitic infections produces its own damaging set of symptoms. Roundworm usually leads to malnutrition, impaired growth and development as well as abdominal obstruction. Whipworm can result in growth retardation, chronic colitis and iron deficiency anaemia. In Jamaica, a study revealed that whipworm also affected psychomotor development among children aged three to six. Hookworms can lead to iron deficiency anaemia, while schistosomes contribute to decreased work capacity and severe disease.

Learning difficulties

Worm infections affect school performance in many ways. As noted earlier, worm infections contribute to malnutrition and iron deficiency anemia. School-aged children deficient in iron are less alert, less attentive and have more difficulty concentrating than non-anaemic children. Hookworms are considered to be one of the principal causes of anaemia because of the blood loss they incur. Studies have also shown that growth retardation is associated with poor levels of school achievement.

Other nutritional implications of worm infection include impaired digestion and bacterial overgrowth because of whipworms and the impaired absorption of fat, protein and vitamin A caused by roundworms. Generally, worms cause diarrhoea, which further reduces nutritional status and lowers resistance to infection.

The impact of the worm burden is further exacerbated by cultural practice. In many countries, mothers feed their children less during bouts of parasitic disease, believing that this will facilitate their recovery.

Treatment

Mass treatment of children in their schools is viewed as a powerful tool for improving health. It can reduce infection while serving as a focal point for health education and other interventions to improve health, particularly iodine and vitamin A supplementation.

Roundworm, hookworm and whipworm can be treated with a single annual dose of an anthelminthic, although in the case of hookworm this must be supplemented with ferrous sulphate to prevent illness. A single dose of praziquantel every few years will prevent significant infection levels of schistosomes. Treatment costs — including the purchase of albendazole, praziquantel, vitamin A and iodine as well as programme administration — are low, estimated at US$1-$1.50 per child annually.

Recent investigations show that the treatment of intestinal helminths leads to improved physical fitness, growth and appetite among students in areas where helminths and stunted growth are highly prevalent. Treatment also results in improved performance on cognitive tests.

In Jamaica, the removal of whipworms in a sample of school-aged children led to a significant improvement in auditory short-term memory as well as their ability to recall information in long-term memory.

In Kenya, children with large parasitic loads performed more poorly on tasks for visual discrimination and memory retrieval than a matched group of students treated for worms.

Deworming is as essential as iron and iodine supplementation. Additional investment in the provision of water and basic sanitation services along with the integration of health education into the curriculum would also dramatically benefit children.

This article was abstracted from *Nutrition, Health and Learning: Current Issues and Trends*; School Nutrition and Health Network Monograph Series #1, a paper by Dr. Beryl Levinger, Director, International Basic Education Programs, Education Development Center, Inc., Newton, Massachusetts (USA).

Giving peace a sporting chance

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) and UNICEF have forged a new partnership to help create peace and promote good health for young adults through sports.

An agreement of collaboration was signed in January of this year by UNICEF Executive Director James P. Grant and IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch, and several joint projects are to be explored. Priority will go to promoting health and fitness initiatives, including efforts to eliminate polio.

At the opening ceremony of the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer (Norway), IOC President Samaranch appealed to the fighting factions in former Yugoslavia to put down their arms and observe the Olympic truce. UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Liv Ullman drew attention to the suffering of the children of Sarajevo, where the Olympic Winter Games had been held just 10 years earlier, and invited the Olympic athletes to become spokespersons for children's health.

The people of Norway, supported by Norwegian athletes, organized a 'Lillehammer Olympic Aid' campaign, and raised several million dollars for the people of Sarajevo as well as for health, education and refugee projects in Afghanistan, Eritrea, Guatemala and Lebanon. In Lillehammer's main street, an ice sculpture was erected and people placed candles around it, which they had bought as a contribution to the Olympic Aid. Young people collected donations during a public concert, and speed skater Johann Olav Koss, who set world records and won three gold medals, donated his prize money as well as the money generated from the auction of his skates to the Olympic Aid fund.

Posters at the Olympic Village appealed to athletes to support the IOC-UNICEF efforts and "to make every child a winner." The UNICEF leaflet, 'Children — A Truce for the Future' — describing UNICEF efforts to stop conflicts and create 'corridors of peace' for children — was also widely distributed.

The Summer Olympics, to be held in Atlanta in 1996, offer another opportunity to collaborate with the Olympic family for peace and health, while celebrating the 50th anniversary of UNICEF.

Kids meet kids at Conference on Violence

More than 200 children, between the ages of 7 and 19, gathered at UNICEF headquarters in New York for the International Children's Congress on Violence in April.

The meeting was sponsored by Kids Meeting Kids, a youth-run organization that works to foster change by bringing together young people from around the world.

This year's conference focused on how the young are affected by violence — from war and conflict to violence in city streets, homelessness, hunger and prostitution. Participants talked about the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and small group sessions focused on creating solutions and concrete ways to stop violence.

The young people who attended represented more than 60 countries around the world. While a majority of them are currently living in the United States, many were born in other parts of the world and have lived outside of the US for much of their lives.

"I'm here to help people in trouble in the world," said 10-year-old Pablo, who is Mexican but lives in New York.

During a discussion of violence, seven-year-old Muyembe from Zambia wrote in blue magic marker, "I think violence is when there is war and kids can't pick flowers because there aren't any flowers."

At the end of the day, the children discussed concrete ways they could contribute to a more peaceful world. "Everyone can make a difference," said 10-year-old Rishi who was born in the US but has spent time in India. "They can sign petitions to ban guns, learn to compromise and learn respect and understanding."

EVENTS AND MEETINGS

1994

International Year of the Family, global (Contact: IYF Coordinator, tel: (43-1)211-31; fax: (43-1)23 2156); International Year of the Midwife, global (Contact: Joan Walker, International Confederation of Midwives, tel: (081) 994 6477; fax: (081) 995 1332).

July

3-7, 26th International Conference on Social Welfare 'Global Welfare 94', Helsinki (Contact: Janet Nelson, UNICEF New York, Division of Public Affairs); **11**, World Population Day, global (Contact: UNFPA).

August

1-7, World Breastfeeding Week 'Making the International Code Work' (Contact: WABA, P.O. Box 1200, 10850 Penang, Malaysia; fax: (604)657-2655); **7-13**, 10th International Conference on AIDS, Yokohama, Japan (Contact: Congress Corporation, Namiki Bldg., 5-3 Kamiyama-cho, Shibaya-ku, Tokyo 150, Japan, fax: (813)3466-5246).

September

5-13, International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo (Contact: UNFPA); **8**, International Literacy Day, global (Contact: UNFPA); **10–13**, 10th International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect, Kuala Lumpur (Contact: Malaysian Council for Child Welfare, 25A Jalan Kampung Panden, 55100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, fax: (603)983-2400); **11-17**, 92nd Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference, Copenhagen (Contact: Rebeca Rios-Kohn, UNICEF New York, Division of Public Affairs); **20**, International Day of Peace, global (Contact: UN).

October

2-9, Special services for AIDS patients and HIV-positive people (both local and visitors), Tananarive, Madagascar (Contact: Pasteur Rajaobelina Godefroy, Ive 36 Anosisoa, Ambohimanarina 101, Tananarive, Madagascar); **3**, World Habitat Day, global (Contact: UN Centre for Human Settlement, Nairobi); **4-14**, 40th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, Alberta, Canada (Contact: Rebeca Rios-Kohn, UNICEF New York, Division of Public Affairs); **10**, General debate on the role of the family in the promotion of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Contact: UN Centre for Human Rights, Geneva); **12-15**, International Conference on Social Development 'Today's Families — A Bridge to the Future', Montreal, Canada (Contact: IYF Coordinator, tel: (43-1)211-31; fax: (43-1)23 2156); **16**, World Food Day, global (Contact: FAO, Rome); **17**, International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, global (Contact: UN Dept. for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development); **20**, World Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) 100th Anniversary, London (Contact: Secretary for Communication, World YWCA, 37, Quai Wilson, Geneva, Switzerland, tel: (41-22)732-3100; fax: (41-22)731-7938); **24**, United Nations Day, global (Contact: UN).

Please let ***First Call for Children*** know about your events and meetings by sending notices four months prior to the event to Yvonne Lester, ***First Call for Children***, 3 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA or fax: (212) 326-7768.

NGO Action for Children

Produced by the NGO Committee on UNICEF

NGOs make a dent at ICPD PrepCom

NGO impact on the outcome of United Nations conferences has been growing steadily and significantly. During the conferences, NGO Forums have sometimes drawn more attention and enthusiasm than the main event. But to have a real impact on the final outcome, NGOs have learned that their advocacy work must begin almost two years before a conference convenes — by the first of three Preparatory Committee Meetings (or PrepComs) where the Platform of Action, or final conference document, is hammered out.

The following report looks at some of the major gains and hotly debated issues that brought almost 1,000 NGOs to New York for three weeks in April for the third and final PrepCom for the International Conference on Population and Development.

By Sara Ann Friedman

As the International Conference on Population and Development approaches (Cairo, 5-13 September), NGOs have worked tirelessly to influence the final document. At the third and final PrepCom, their caucusing, debating, networking, disseminating information, and last-minute lobbying of delegates to include their agendas in the final Platform of Action has been resolute.

NGO participation was unprecedented, according to Mary Beth Powers, Executive Director of the NGO Planning Committee for ICPD, who said that NGOs provided and received training in lobbying. They were in constant contact with delegates, and at least one session lasted until 10 p.m. because members honoured every NGO request to speak. In several cases, country delegations actually ceded their own time to NGOs.

NGOs move ahead

The most important progress achieved over more than two years of dialogue between government delegates and NGOs has been the shift in emphasis from strict population policies, which focus solely on modern methods of family planning and distribution, to the recognition of family planning and reproductive and sexual health as human rights.

Advocates of strict population policies fear that support of reproductive rights divert or scatter scarce resources, said Nassein Huq, an NGO from Bangladesh. "But if you give women power over their own bodies and their own lives, they will be far more likely to have fewer children." And society benefits when women benefit, she said.

Reproductive health advocates stress the importance of access to information and services that permit informed choice, safe sex and safe abortion. For poor women the agenda must go way beyond physical health to the definition by the World Health Organization (WHO) of total 'well-being'. It must begin at birth, even before, addressing issues of gender preference, female infanticide, early marriage, female genital mutilation, dowries and inheritance laws. Education and employment are as effective methods of natural family planning as herbal teas, abstinence or breastfeeding, observed an NGO representative from Latin America, "but with far more lasting results."

Children who live or work on the street attended a Nairobi workshop run by the US-based Advocates for Youth. They discussed life choices including pregnancy, sexuality, motherhood and responsibility.

A racket over brackets

At the same time, the final ICPD PrepCom set the stage for passionate debate, leaving many issues unresolved until Cairo. Old tensions lingered and new skirmishes erupted over language and definition as some read 'population control' as enforced sterilization of the poor, others defined 'reproductive health' as a euphemism for abortion and 'life planning skills' for permissive sexuality, and some groups urged that 'reproduction' be replaced by 'procreation'.

The most serious threat to consensus, however, was the difference over references in the Platform of Action to abortion, pregnancy prevention by other than 'natural' methods, and access to confidential information and services for unmarried adolescents, which left key sections of the document in brackets (in a few cases double brackets), which means they are left until Cairo to be negotiated or eliminated.

For some Southern NGOs, the platform is still a Northern agenda that rides roughshod over cultural traditions, ignoring the poverty of developing countries and the North's own consumption. For advocates of children and young people, this document was a step in the right direction but did not go far enough in addressing issues of human resources. Pointing out that the Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees protection to children and young people up to the age of 18, NGOs who work for children called particular attention to the impact on development of early marriage and of child-bearing on the education of adolescents and the serious problem in many countries of pregnant girls forced to leave school with no opportunity to return.

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Substitute families: A report from Malta

Published by the NGO Committee on UNICEF and the International Social Service, this report covers the issues addressed at the Workshop on Substitute Families, organized by the NGO Committee on UNICEF, held at the World NGO Forum in Malta (November 1993). Responding to increasing efforts to keep or re-establish a child in her/his family, and a growing preference to alternative families over institutionalization, the workshop examined positive and realistic suggestions for substitute families.

At the workshop, speakers from Algeria, Romania and Uganda, among others, addressed such issues as: the right of an orphaned or abandoned child to a family environment, family reintegration of institutionalized children, the *kafalah* (an Islamic tradition), inter-country adoption and the Hague Convention, and substitute families for AIDs orphans.

For copies of the report, contact: NGO Committee on UNICEF, Palais des Nations, CH-1211, Geneva 10, Switzerland. Tel: 41.22.798.58.50; fax: 41.22.791.08.22.

NGOs prepare for World Summit for Social Development

NGOs have learned that if they are to influence the Platform of Action at a United Nations conference, they must do their work well in advance *(see above article on ICPD)*. The goals of the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) state: "The Platform of Action will focus on strategies to ensure an enabling environment for social development." That includes alleviating widespread poverty, increasing productive unemployment and emphasizing social integration.

The WSSD cannot address the issue of alleviating poverty without placing children, one third of the world's population, at the centre of its concern, yet the first official WSSD documents contained very few references to the concerns of children. Consider the facts:

- Children under 16 make up 34 per cent of the world's population.
- Approximately 600 million children under 16 live in poverty in the developing world.
- 100-200 million children worldwide work, many of them in exploitative and numbing tasks that destroy their physical or psychological health.
- Over 130 million children in developing countries alone are not enrolled in primary school.
- 200 million children under five years of age are estimated to be underweight.

The WSSD cannot discuss the means to enhance productive employment or bring about social integration without placing the health, education, development and dignity of girls and boys equally at the centre of its concern.

During PrepCom I, a number of international NGOs organized a Caucus on the Rights of the Child and presented to the secretariat a statement on the specific issues of nutrition and health, education, child labour, children's participation and the girl child as they relate to the core concerns of the WSSD.

On 28 April, a Forum organized by the NGO Committee on UNICEF addressed the role of NGOs in the three upcoming United Nations world conferences. Following are some of the recommendations prepared by the Caucus and the Forum for continuing action of NGOs as PrepCom II approaches (22 August-2 September):

- The WSSD Plan of Action must develop explicit and comprehensive policies directed towards children.
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child should provide the framework for addressing children's issues in the WSSD.
- The goals of the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children should be restated and reaffirmed.
- Throughout the entire document, the concerns of children should be addressed both from a sectoral (health, nutrition, access to education, labour exploitation, gender equity) and population (girls, displaced children, street and working children, rural and urban children, disabled children) perspective.
- The WSSD Platform of Action should recommend that countries develop national plans of action with quantifiable goals relating to each of the three themes as well as a system for monitoring the implementation of these goals.

For further information, contact: Haroon Khan, UNICEF, 3 UN Plaza, H-6F, New York, NY 10017, USA. Tel: 212-326-7304; fax: 212-326-7260. Or: UN-NGLS, 866 UN Plaza, Room 6015, New York, NY 10017, USA. Tel: 212-963-3125; fax: 212-963-8712. Or: UN-NGLS, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland. Tel: 41.22.907.2076; fax: 41.22.907.0057.

China women's group wins Maurice Pate Award

The All China Women's Federation (ACWF), one of the world's largest NGOs, was the recipient of UNICEF's 1994 Maurice Pate Award. Founded in 1949, ACWF promotes health education and children's rights and has used its trained network of women's groups to reach 1.1 billion people throughout China's 30 provinces.

"Mobilizing village and neighbourhood women from different ethnic and social economic groups, ACWF has transformed sectoral projects into social movements," said Anna Makinda, the UNICEF Executive Board Chairperson who presented the award.

Named after UNICEF's first Executive Director, Maurice Pate, the US$25,000 award recognizes and honours an institution, organization or individual for extraordinary contribution to the advancement of children's well-being.

In the area of immunization, the network of women's groups supported by 100,000 professional workers has helped to break down sociocultural barriers to immunization, resulting in high levels of coverage that have been sustained for over five years.

Other ACWF initiatives include training of preschool teachers, improving community-managed preschools and disseminating information on maternal and child health care.

In partnership with local authorities, ACWF has strengthened 130,000 'Parents' Schools' by training teachers in family life education. Through these schools, hundreds of thousands of parents have been motivated to become better child-care promoters.

With home visits to China's underserved minority areas where disparities in primary school enrolment of boys and girls are particularly acute, the Federation's village workers encourage parents to send their daughters to schools. ACWF also advocates increased recruitment of female teachers in these areas.

Working in close partnership with UNICEF, ACWF was instrumental in helping the Chinese Government draw up its National Programme of Action for Child Development in China in the 1990s, preparing investigations, reports and recommendations. It has worked vigorously to push for China's ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Conference on International Development, Children and Women

The Association for the Advancement of Policy, Research and Development in the Third World will hold a conference in Washington, D.C., from 17 to 19 November 1994. Some of the topics to be covered through papers, presentations and round-tables include: 'Children and women in development'; 'The missing link: Education for women in development'; 'Indigenous women: Their time has come'.

For further information, contact: Association for the Advancement of Policy, Research and Development in the Third World, P.O. Box 70257, Washington, D.C. 20024, USA. Tel/fax: 202-723-7010.

UNICEF/Steve Hansen

Lack of water and sanitation services has facilitated the spread of disease in some of Ecuador's most impoverished communities. Young people are turning into committed environmentalists and organizing themselves to clean up their environment.

Ecuador: Small people set a great example

As international interest begins to focus on the scope, content and application of child participation in matters affecting their own lives, children all over the world are already doing just that in increasingly effective ways. This is a good time to think less about theoretical parameters and what we can teach them, and begin to look more at what they are doing and what they can teach us.

The following story about children's efforts to determine the course of their own lives is one of many that **NGO Action for Children** *hopes to report on. We encourage readers who know of other such stories to pass them on to us.*

By Consuelo Arbornez

They are young, dynamic and 'green'. Almost 50,000 children and adolescents from 24 towns and cities in 21 provinces of Ecuador have turned into vigilant committed environmentalists.

As part of the 'Small People Set a Great Example' campaign, sponsored by the Central Bank's Working Youth Programme and supported by UNICEF, 160 groups of children from poor comunities are working on ways to clean up their environment.

In Cotopaxi Province, 14-year-old Juan Carlos Molina was a member of a group that identified a number of environmental problems in that area. "We have serious lead pollution from the glazing process at a local ceramic factory," Juan Carlos explains. "This not only harms people but has caused birth defects in animals." The group has suggested replacing this process with a new method that uses a natural substance derived from plants.

The group also discovered destruction caused by hazardous fishing techniques — where high voltage charges, dynamite and even poison are used to catch fish in local rivers — and it identified massive deforestation for the production of wooden masks. "They chop down a whole tree, make just four masks and throw away the rest of the wood," says Juan Carlos.

Almost 50,000 children helped draft a plan of action to be implemented by the Ecuadorian Government as soon as it had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990. In that plan, the children identified three main areas of concern: nutrition, lack of housing and deterioration of the environment. The government programme which emerged from this initiative is designed to ensure children their right to a healthy environment.

Recently, young Ecuadorians, who form 38 per cent of the country's population of 11 million, have been active in understanding and demanding their rights. In 1990, 186,000 children voted in a children's election, which was followed by the first National Children's Summit in 1991.

The Summit encouraged the young participants to launch new activities in Quito, the capital, where they identified the highly polluted Manchagara River as the city's most serious problem. But the solution was beyond their reach, so instead, they voted to clean up and reforest the slopes of the Pichincha Volcano to help prevent the landslides that regularly occur during the rainy season.

Silvia Delgado, a 15-year-old from one of Quito's impoverished districts, was part of a group that decided to prevent seasonal mud-slides. "After the rainy season, we collected a lot of garbage, planted trees and painted murals about how the environment should be," she says. Silvia's group also drew up an ecological map of Quito.

In another project, the children identified severe lead pollution from gasoline and organized themselves into three groups — promoters, reporters and rangers — to work on the problem. The promoters, often older children, encourage an interest in environmental issues among younger children; the reporters write and publish a newspaper with letters and reports from around the country; and the rangers roam around the city jotting down the license plates of vehicles emitting toxic fumes. They pass on the numbers to the national traffic department which has signed a special agreement with the children.

The children's activities have prompted wide support from local authorities and technical assistance from more than 40 community and environmental organizations. More than 50 local councils and the mayors of Quito, Guayaquil, Riobamba and several other cities have signed agreements committing them to implement environmental protection measures.

The Consortium of Amazonian Municipalities sponsored the first Amazon Children's Summit, where curious youngsters met traditional healers who warned them about the urgent need to protect forests and safeguard animals. And a permanent environmental protection monitoring commission was set up to draft ordinances to protect the environment and establish an environmental action network.

Until now, local people, who suffer the effects of environmental degradation, have been passive, leaving outside experts to diagnose and 'fix' their problems. "This time we decided to let the children do it," says Soledad Moscosco, a sociologist and coordinator of the campaign. "It seems to be the most effective approach because we're creating new citizens who can act democratically.

"Next year," says Ms. Moscosco with confidence, "we plan to consolidate our relationship with the municipalities to ensure proper follow-up and provide the children with more physical space to work." No doubt they will get just what they want.

Consuelo Arbornez is a journalist in Ecuador and a correspondent for the Women's Feature Service.

ICPD PrepCom and NGOs

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A youth caucus at work

Amid the numerous regional and issue-oriented caucuses, a dozen youth-oriented NGOs from countries including Colombia, Finland, Guatemala, Kenya, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and the United States met daily to focus on specific and far-reaching platform language. Their goal was a final document that would acknowledge the urgent need and lay the groundwork for government policies and programmes that provide adolescent reproductive health services — specifically addressing unplanned pregnancies, unsafe abortion, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and the means to provide a healthy transition from childhood to adulthood.

Mostly they agreed that major gains had been achieved by the recognition of 'youth' and 'adolescents' throughout the document, the establishment of 18 as the legal marriage age for both sexes, and the elimination of the harmful traditional practices that affect young girls and adolescents, such as dowry and bride prices, gender-based inheritance laws and practices, and female genital mutilation.

Numbering 500 million today, young people aged 15-19 are the largest growing and most underserved, underrepresented population worldwide. As families are torn apart by poverty and urban migration, and the omnipresent mass media extends its influence, today's youth is a generation at sea and at great risk. This is especially true of its young women who suffer the physical and emotional damage of too many children too soon and aborted educational opportunities because of unplanned pregnancy, leaving them with little hope or future but to perpetuate the vicious cycle of poverty and despair.

According to some NGOs from the region, the traditional roles of elders and caretakers that protected the young from premature sexual initiation, and provided information about sexuality and rites of passage, have disappeared. One NGO participant said there is no relevant education from schools or communities, but instead, a lack of support from a "fearful society that would turn back the clock and close its eyes to the changing realities."

Despite a rather grim picture, young people themselves are becoming a powerful resource for action and change. They possess the energy, enthusiasm and openness to new ideas critical to improving their own sexual and reproductive health and development. While parents, policy makers and elders debate about what to teach their children, youths are already acting in resourceful and creative ways to obtain the information they need. Examples of youth-driven initiatives are being carried out by NGOs around the world. Youth theatre, peer education radio programmes and rap music are having an impact on young and old alike.

While none could ignore the worrisome global statistics about adolescent pregnancy and abortion or disagree that adolescent girls lack the physical and emotional maturity to bear children, the questions of how to avoid unwanted pregnancy and what to do about it when it happens were at the storm's eye.

For some, pregnancy prevention is acceptable only to married couples and restricted to the use of 'natural' methods, such as breastfeeding, herbs and teas, or abstinence. "Breastfeeding is irrelevant, unless you're a nursing mother," said one NGO representative. "And it does nothing to protect you from AIDS."

A number of delegations insisted that services be limited only to couples and disputed the whole idea of reproductive and sexual health services. Unmarried adolescents would then be excluded from those essential reproductive and sexual health services which would reduce the toll taken by unsafe abortions, STDs and unplanned pregnancies.

Sex education

A second major concern to the Youth Caucus at the PrepCom was the unresolved issue of sex education. "Young people need to learn about sexuality, body development, fertility, and when they do decide to have sex, how to protect themselves," said Dr. Asha Mohamud, representing the Center for Population Options, a US-based NGO and a member of the Youth Caucus. Sex education, she said, should include learning about the signs of pregnancy, how to negotiate relationships, when and how to say 'no' and the full consequences of saying 'yes', as well as gender stereotypes, and the involvement and responsibility of boys.

In our society today, said Dr. Wanoi Njau (Executive Secretary of the Kenyan NGO, Center for the Study of Adolescence), since neither parents nor grandparents are talking to their children about sexuality, they are getting their 'mis'information from peers and the media. Successful sex education, she said, is a whole package of information and counselling that **begins** with delaying sexual initiation.

Despite the widespread misconception that access to sex education or modern family planning promotes promiscuity, a WHO review of 35 studies in several countries concluded the opposite: Appropriate sex education does not encourage earlier initiation but often delays it, leading to safer sexual practices. Teenage sexuality is a reality that must be accepted, say Njau and many others. Instead of withholding information in the hope that it will go away, governments should take the lead and establish appropriate policies and programmes.

Confidentiality

Still, the hardest fought battle with the most discouraging results for youth advocates was over confidentiality regarding access to reproductive services, an issue which remains enclosed in 'double' brackets: "[Access to, as well as confidentiality and privacy of, these services must be ensured [with due regard to parental rights and responsibilities].]" (Chapter VI, 6.12)

For members of the Youth Caucus and most youth advocates, parental control renders confidentiality — which they consider essential — totally meaningless. Fear of adult disapproval keeps adolescents filled with anxiety, shame and guilt and a desire for secrecy about their bodies, their sexual experience, and especially unplanned pregnancy. Parental fear, which is even greater, does not lead to a family atmosphere of openness. "Of course, parents should be involved," said an NGO participant from Nigeria. They need to be trained, to open up and to participate, but not to "call the shots from their own fears and authority without understanding."

Sara Ann Friedman is the Editor of **NGO Action for Children.**

Adolescent sexuality: The facts

1. More than 15 million girls aged 15-19 give birth every year, and as many as another 5 million may have abortions.

2. In Central America, 18 per cent of all births are to adolescents, and in some parts of Africa the proportion reaches 23 per cent.

3. In the United States there are nearly 1 million adolescent pregnancies of which over 450,000 end in abortion.

4. Figures on the number of adolescents in developing countries having abortions are very hard to obtain; estimates range between 1 million and 4.4 million. Many of these procedures are illegal and performed under unsafe conditions.

5. It is estimated that globally there are some 50 million girls aged 15-19 who undergo induced abortions annually.

6. A recent survey in Costa Rica found that only 10 per cent of sexually active teenagers, 17 and under, used any form of modern family planning methods at first intercourse. A study in Kenya showed that 89 per cent of sexually active teenagers never used any method of modern family planning. Fewer than 30 per of married adolescents in developing countries use modern family planning methods.

7. One out of 20 teenagers contracts an STD annually. About half of all HIV infections to date have occurred in people under 25. Since the pandemic began, more than 6 million youth have been infected with HIV.

8. In the rural areas of the State of Rajasthan (India) there is no baseline data on adolescent pregnancy. Girls are kept hidden in the villages where their pregnancies are aborted by traditional herbal methods. Since unwed motherhood is prohibited in these areas, the data simply does not exist.

Sources for facts:
1-3, International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF).
4-6, Population Action International (PAI).
7, Center for Population Options and Population Reference Bureau (CPO/PRB).
8, Rajasthan Adult Education Association.

Publications

The following pamphlets and brochures contain useful data, approaches and NGO programmes in adolescent reproductive health.

Understanding Adolescents. An IPPF Report on young people's sexual and reproductive health needs. Regent's College, Inner Circle, Regent's Park, London NW1 4 NS, UK. Tel: 44.71.86.741; fax: 44.71.487.7950.

Youth at Risk: Meeting the Sexual Health Needs of Adolescents. Population Action International, 1120 19th Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036, USA. Tel: 202-659-1833; fax: 202-293-1795.

The World's Youth 1994: A Special Focus on Reproductive Health. Center for Population Options, 1025 Vermont Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20005, USA. Tel: 202-347-5700; fax: 202-357-2263.

Risks and Consequences: Adolescent Sexual Activity and Childbearing in Latin America and the Caribbean (in collaboration with Demographic and Health Surveys). Contact: International Programmes, Population Reference Bureau, Inc., 1875 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Suite 520, Washington, D.C. 20009, USA. Tel: 202-483-1100; fax: 202-328-3937.

Adolescent Women in Sub-Saharan Africa. A chartbook on marriage and child-bearing. Contact same as above.

Youth Forum planned for Cairo

In Cairo, the controversial debates over language about adolescents that took place at PrepCom III will become a dialogue between adults and adolescents who will finally have the opportunity to make their voices heard.

Eight major international youth laureates have joined together to organize a Youth Forum from 30 August to 4 September, immediately preceding the Cairo Conference (World Scout Bureau, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, World Council of Churches, World Association of Youth, International Youth and Student Movement for the UN, International Planned Parenthood Federation, YWCA, and Society for International Development). Over 100 young people from around the world are expected to participate in the Forum, which will address three sections from the ICPD Platform. These are: youth and reproductive health *(covered in this issue)*; youth and development (including structural adjustment and the impact of poverty); and organization and mobilization of youth at community, national, regional and international level. The young people will produce a report on the meeting and many of them will stay on to participate in the NGO Forum.

For further information about the Cairo Youth Forum, contact: Abdoulaye Sar, World Scout Bureau, Case 241, 1211 Geneva 4, Switzerland. Tel: 41.22.320.4233.

NGO Action for Children

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RESOURCES

UNICEF publications
Available from
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New York, NY 10017, USA.

Available in English unless otherwise noted.

Debt Relief for Africa: A Call for Urgent Action on Human Development, by Dr. G. K. Helleiner. A new impetus is advocated for debt relief in Africa and for increased budgetary expenditures on social development. UNICEF Staff Working Paper No. 11. 1993. 17 p. US$5.95.

20/20: Mobilizing Resources for Children in the 1990s, by David Parker and Eva Jespersen. It is estimated that the '20/20' proposal for government and donor spending could address the worst aspects of poverty in the short term and pave the way for longer-term human development. UNICEF Staff Working Paper No. 12. 1994. 47 p. Also available in French. US$6.95.

The following publications are available from your nearest UNICEF office or National Committee, or from UNICEF, 3 UN Plaza H-9F, New York, NY 10017, USA:

The Progress of Nations 1994. The nations of the world are ranked according to their achievements in child health, nutrition, education, family planning and progress for women. Also available in French and Spanish. Arabic, Bangla, Chinese, Farsi, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish, Turkish and Urdu available from the respective local offices. US$6.95.

1994 UNICEF Annual Report. Review of UNICEF's operations, programme developments and challenges for children and women in the developing countries. Available also in Arabic, French, Japanese, Spanish and other languages (contact the local UNICEF office). Free.

Anti-personnel Land-mines: A Scourge on Children. Land-mines are killing or horribly mutilating children and women in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. The international community is urged to adopt a total ban on these weapons. Booklet. 48 p. Also available in French and Spanish. US$5.95.

Children of War: Wandering Alone in Southern Sudan, by Johannes Zutt. During the last six years some 20,000 children between the ages of 7 and 17, mostly boys, have trekked enormous distances seeking refuge from the conflicts and famine. Booklet. 50 p. A French version will follow. US$3.95.

To Be Born Female... The prejudices girls face cross boundaries of culture, nationality and economic class and follow them into adulthood. This six-page brochure aims to build alliances on their behalf. Also available in French and Spanish. Free.

The following publications are available from the UNICEF International Child Development Centre, Spedale degli Innocenti, Piazza SS. Annunziata 12, 50122, Florence, Italy.

The Best Interests of the Child: International Perspectives. A collection of original essays by leading international scholars on the impact of the Convention on the Rights of the Child at national and local levels, edited by Philip Alston. Essential for all those interested in family law and children's law and in the human rights of the child. Published by Oxford University Press in association with UNICEF ICDC. 250 p. Paperback. £17.95/US$27.

Urban Children in Distress: Global Predicaments and Innovative Strategies, by Cristina Szanton Blanc and contributors. Based on field work in Brazil, India, Italy, Kenya and the Philippines, the 512-page book looks at the desparate situations facing street children and offers critiques and recommendations for federal, municipal and community action. Available to UNICEF field and National Committee offices from ICDC. All non-UNICEF orders should be made directly to the publisher: Gordon and Breach, 270 Eighth Avenue, New York, NY 10011, USA. Fax: 1-201-643-7676. Hardback US$50; paperback US$25.

Innocenti Publications Catalogue. April 1994. 26 p. Free.

Innocenti Occasional Papers:

Policy and Capital Market Constraints to the African Green Revolution: A Study of Maize and Sorghum Yields in Kenya, Malawi and Zimbabwe, 1960-91, by Paul Mosley. December 1993. Economic Policy Series No. 38. US$8.

Other Publications:

Earth Summit's Agenda for Change: A Plain Language Version of Agenda 21 and the other Rio Agreements, by Michael Keating. This booklet condenses the more than 700 pages of Agenda 21 into 70 pages of clear, readable text without losing its comprehensiveness. Published by the Centre for Our Common Future, 52 rue de Paquis, 1201 Geneva, Switzerland. Also available in French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish. US$10, packing and postage included. Discounts available on bulk purchases.

Communication for Health and Behaviour Change — A Developing Country Perspective, by Judith A. Graeff, John P. Elder and Elizabeth Mills Booth. A new HealthCom Project publication produced by Jossey-Bass Inc., San Francisco (Fax: 1-800-605-2665). 240 p. US$23.95. (Professionals in developing countries may request single copies free of charge by writing to the Academy for Educational Development HealthCom Project, 1875 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. 20006, USA.)

Making Global Connections in the Middle School: Lessons on the Environment, Development and Equity, edited by William Luderer. A teacher's resource book on sustainable development, suggested for use in secondary schools as well as middle schools. Produced by Global Learning Inc., 1018 Stuyvesant Avenue, Union, NJ 07083, USA. US$12, plus postage and packing.

Home Gardening in South Asia: The Complete Handbook. This softcover book discusses issues and technicalities involved in making home gardening and social marketing/nutrition promotion programmes successful. Illustrated with step-by-step instructions. Produced by Helen Keller International (Bangladesh), PO Box 6066 Gulshan, Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh. Fax: 8802 813 310. US$8 for developing countries; US$12 for industrialized countries, plus postage: to South-East Asia or Africa — airmail US$9 or book postage US$6; to North or South America — airmail US$10 or book postage US$7.50.

Teaching Aids at Low Cost (TALC). The 1994 lists of books, slides and teaching accessories are now available from TALC, PO Box 49, St. Albans, Herts, AL1 4AX, U.K. Fax: 44 727 846 852.

UNICEF Videos
Audiovisual materials are available from UNICEF offices and National Committees. (Check with your local office for catalogues.)

Day of the African Child. 9 minutes 30 seconds. This video, prepared for the 16 June observance of this Day, looks at the challenges facing African children — lack of clean water, adequate health care and basic education. It shows how these problems are being tackled. Available also in French and international sound.

Going Home! The Story of Unaccompanied Children of Southern Sudan. 13 minutes. Video documents the plight, and the efforts for family reunion, of the young boys in refugee camps in Ethiopia and Kenya who escaped from the civil conflict in southern Sudan.

The Long Way Around: We All Lived Together. 30 minutes. In this video children of different and mixed ethnic origins in former Yugoslavia talk about their own experience of the war.

Dividing the Mango. 13 minutes 26 seconds. Animated cartoon video on girls' unequal nutrition and workload: second in the **Meena** series on the girl child in South Asia. Also available in Bangla, Hindi, Nepali, Urdu and other Indian languages. French and Dutch versions are planned.

First Call for Children

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